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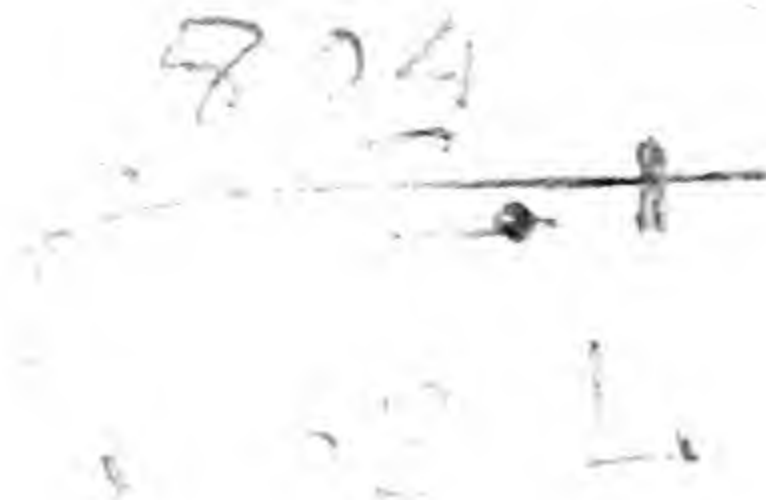
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THE LAOCOON.



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THE LAOCOON, AND OTHER
PROSE WRITINGS^N OF LESSING.—
TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
W. B. RÖNNFELDT.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING was born on the 22nd January 1729, at Kamenzen, in Saxony. Upon leaving school he studied at Leipzig; in 1750 he moved to Berlin, where he devoted himself to poetry and criticism and published his *Minor Writings* and the *Theatrical Library*. In 1755 he completed his tragedy, *Miss Sara Sampson*, which was performed in the same year and at once became popular, exercising a powerful influence throughout Germany. In conjunction with F. Nicolai and Moses Mendelssohn, Lessing now began the famous *Literaturbriefe*, a series of letters dealing with contemporary literature. He also wrote his *Fables* about this time. In 1760 he was elected a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Berlin, and in the same year, feeling dissatisfied with his prospects in that city, he went to Breslau, where he secured the appointment of secretary to General Tauentzien, the governor of that town. Here he wrote his masterpieces, *Minna von Barnhelm* and the *Laocoon*. In the spring of 1767 he went to Hamburg, in response to an invitation to take part in the institution of a national theatre, and there it was that he wrote his famous *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (Dramatic Notes), which he published some two years later. We next find him at Wolfenbüttel, whither he had gone in 1770 to accept the post of librarian, which he retained for the remainder of his life. In 1772 appeared his *Emilia Galotti*, a powerful

tragedy founded upon the story of the Roman Virginia, whom her father slays to save her from dishonour. This play produced an instantaneous effect and was soon performed throughout the whole of Germany. Between the years 1773 and 1778 he published the celebrated *Wolfenbüttel Fragments*, dealing with theological questions, which, after being long imputed by his adversaries to Lessing himself, were ultimately discovered to have been written by H. S. Reimarus. These called forth a number of hostile criticisms, in connection with which Lessing's most famous rejoinder was contained in the *Anti-Gotze*, a series of articles dealing with the attacks made upon him by Gotze, the chief pastor of Hamburg, and others. In 1778-79 Lessing wrote his last play, *Nathan the Wise*. This drama, the chief aim of which was to preach the gospel of toleration by showing that true nobility of character can, and does, exist quite irrespective of any particular creed, was the outcome of the theological controversies in which Lessing had of late been engaged. It is written in blank verse, and is the most popular of Lessing's works, forming, as it does, one of the finest dramatic productions of the last century. In 1778-80 he published five dialogues on Freemasonry, entitled *Ernst und Falk*. These dialogues, in which he indicates the ideal at which Masonry should aim, belong admittedly to the best of Lessing's compositions. In 1780 also appeared the *Education of the Human Race*, his last literary production. The enormous amount of work undertaken by him during the last few years, coupled with the anxiety which it had occasioned, proved too much for him, and his health, which had gradually been undermined since he first went to Wolfenbüttel, now gave way altogether. After a brief illness he died at Brunswick on the 15th February 1781.

INTRODUCTION.

"THE boon which the German nation has derived from the fact that, at the very threshold of its period of classical literature, there stands such a man as Lessing, is truly an incalculable one. His character is as pure as his thoughts, his work as restless as his style. In his person, allegiance to truth and love of truth personified guard the portals of our literature."¹ These words contain no exaggeration; yet there are many readers in England to-day to whom Lessing is but a name, whereas Goethe and Schiller, beside whom he must be ranked, are far better known. This is no doubt due chiefly to the fact that Carlyle, Coleridge, Lewes, and others, have done so much to popularise the works of Goethe and Schiller in this country. To Lessing no equivalent service has been rendered, if we except the late Mr. James Sime's comprehensive and critical work on the Life and Writings of Lessing.

When we attempt to sum up the results of Lessing's work we cannot but be astounded at the colossal and manifold influences which it has exercised, not only upon

¹ D. F. Strauss.

his own countrymen, but also upon the world at large. "In losing him," Goethe wrote to Frau von Stein, "we lose much, very much — far more, indeed, than we imagine."

A man of marvellous activity, Lessing was one of the ablest scholars of his day, and his knowledge of the writers of antiquity was probably unequalled by that of any of his contemporaries.

He opened out new paths for art, the true principles of which had, in his time, so far been forgotten that the plastic arts inclined more and more in the direction of allegory, whilst poetry had, in a similar manner, under the influence of Pope and Thomson in England, and Haller, Brockes, Kleist, and Geszner in Germany, degenerated into mere descriptive writing. Winckelmann had already, in his first work on art, called attention to, and declared war against, the extravagances of the rococo-style at that time so prevalent, and had pointed out that the only way to achieve great results lay in following the ancients. Yet even he failed to grasp in its entirety the fundamental distinction between the art of the poet and that of the painter or sculptor; and it was left for Lessing to make that distinction clear by once for all defining the limits of poetry, on the one hand, and those of painting, or the plastic arts, on the other. This is the aim of his *Laocoon*, in which work he endeavours to show that, although the ultimate object is in reality the same in the case of both poet and artist, yet each is subjected to definite conditions and

limitations, within which alone great results can be attained. The *Laocoon* was never finished as Lessing had intended. Music, and even dancing, were to have been treated in subsequent parts, and the whole would thus have formed a complete work on æsthetics. But even in its actual form, and despite its shortcomings, the *Laocoon* deserves to rank as a classic. Its style is perfect; the learning which it reveals, immense. "One must be a youth," says Goethe, "in order to realise the effect produced upon us by Lessing's *Laocoon*, which transported us from the region of miserable observation into the free fields of thought. The so long misunderstood *Ut pictura, poesis* was at once set aside, and the difference between the plastic and the literary arts made clear; the peaks of both now appeared separated, however near each other might be their bases. . . . As by a flash of lightning, all the consequences of this splendid thought were revealed to us; all previous directive and dogmatic criticism was cast aside like a worn-out garment."¹ *How the Ancients represented Death*, one of Lessing's minor writings, is also justly celebrated. It served, in the words of Goethe, to banish for ever from the domain of art the unseemliness of rattling skeletons and all else that is ugly.

In German literature criticism preceded creation and produced the masterpieces, whereas in other countries it was the masterpieces themselves that led to the development of criticism. Lessing, by his critical writings,

¹ *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, Part II., Book viii.

founded the German drama. If we consider the fact that only a single generation intervened between the production of Gottsched's "Cato" and the masterpieces of Goethe and Schiller, the influence of Lessing upon the national stage will be evident. Gottsched had already attempted to found a national drama, but, although the results which he achieved were to some extent beneficial, his allegiance to the French school was far too great to admit of his introducing into the drama of his own country anything approaching an adequate reform. Another school, founded by Bodmer and Breitinger, had adopted the theory that poetry should appeal directly to the fancy rather than to the understanding or moral sense, and had thus led to a confusion between the limits of poetry and the plastic arts. Of these two schools, the former was unnatural and unreal; it was characterised by an artificial ideality in which the national element was altogether wanting; the latter, on the other hand, whilst retaining this element, was at bottom vulgarised and devoid of any clear ideality. It was Lessing who solved the problem of reconciling the artistic, ideal element of the so-called purified stage with the natural element of the popular one. He became the redeemer and founder of the German drama because his critical insight enabled him to perceive, more clearly than any one else, the nature of this problem, and because he succeeded in giving effective emphasis to his teaching by means of examples. In his *Dramaturgie* he held up the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare as the models to be followed, and finally

delivered Germany from the influences of the French classic tragedy. "If the masterpieces of Shakespeare," he writes, "had been translated, with but a few slight alterations, for our German public, I am convinced that we should have derived more benefit therefrom than we have gained from our acquaintance with Corneille and Racine. In the first place the former would have been more to the taste of the people, and, in the second place, it would have produced active results quite different from those which we owe to the latter; for a genius can only be kindled by a genius. Judged according to the ancients, too, Shakespeare is a far greater tragic poet than Corneille, although the latter knew a great deal, and the former scarcely anything, of their writings. Corneille approaches them more nearly as regards the mechanical construction, Shakespeare in the essential points. The Englishman almost invariably attains the true aim of tragedy, however strange and peculiar the means which he employs; whilst the Frenchman hardly ever attains it, although he follows the paths opened up by the ancients themselves. With the exception of the 'Ædipus' of Sophocles, there is no play in the world that moves our passions more powerfully than 'Othello,' 'King Lear,' and 'Hamlet.' Has Corneille written a single tragedy which could move us even half as much as Voltaire's 'Zaire'? And how inferior, again, is 'Zaire' to the 'Moor of Venice,' of which it is a feeble copy, and from which the character of Orosman has been abstracted bodily!"¹

¹ *Literaturbriefe*, No. 17.

Sophocles and Shakespeare were the dramatists by whom Lessing was principally inspired. He was one of the first to hold up the greatness of Shakespeare to foreign nations.¹ A warm admirer of Molière, he was also indebted to Diderot, who had insisted that, besides tragedy and comedy, there should be a third and intermediate class of dramatic works, to which he gave the name of "le genre sérieux," and which he illustrated by his plays, "Le Fils naturel" and "Le Père de Famille." The latter, however, was far inferior to Lessing in the appropriateness of the dialogue to the nature of the characters, as also in the truth of the actions.

Lessing's efforts to promote the advancement of the literature of his country, both by his teaching and by his example, prepared the way for Goethe and Schiller, Kant and Fichte, and were thus the means of giving to Germany a literature of her own, and one worthy to rank beside those of England and France.

His theological writings, both polemical and otherwise, are also of the highest importance. The *Education of the Human Race* was the last work that Lessing wrote. Looking upon Revelation as being to the race that which Education is to the individual, he there endeavours to show how natural, after all, the historical course of revealed religion appears. The Old Testament, he tells us, was the best medium for the conveyance of divine truths to a people as yet in its childhood; the doctrine

¹ Voltaire's *Lettres sur les Anglais* were written prior to Lessing's time.

of immortality, the doctrine of the Trinity, were only taught at a later stage, when the world was ready to receive them. As regards the New Testament, we have combined the revelations of Christ with truths of reason, so that they will endure even though our belief in His miracles be shattered. Christian dogma itself is but an intermediate stage leading to something higher. Thus, it will be seen, Lessing treats religion as a progressive revelation, in contradistinction to the Rationalists and the orthodox clergy of his day on the one hand, and the Deists on the other.

His controversial writings on theological questions were the means of greatly weakening the obnoxious influence of the narrow-minded and intolerant Protestants of his time. That his work was for the most part of a polemical nature was due to the wretched conditions of the age in which he lived; nor could it be otherwise. He often loved battles for their own sake. He had many, and always came off victorious. "The fearful judgment which he meted out to Lange, Klotz, and Gotze inspired with a wholesome dread all those who sought to desecrate the hallowed temple of art and science with contemptible frippery and useless sham-worship. Even when holding up such persons to the most withering scorn, he was ever imbued with the deepest earnestness of righteous enthusiasm."¹ And here we have the keynote of Lessing's character—Truth. It was towards Truth that his gaze was ever directed, and

¹ Hettner, *Literaturgesch. des xviii. Jahrh.*, III. 2, p. 486.

he lived a great life, because he lived a true one. Against all that was false and hypocritical he waged war with untiring energy; and he regarded morality as the indispensable concomitant of every form of activity. All his writings, actions, and utterances bear the impress of truth. He is the manliest character in German literature. "Not the truth," he writes, "which a man possesses or thinks he possesses, but the sincere endeavours which he has made to arrive at the truth, constitute the worth of the man. For not through the possession of truth, but through the search after it, are those powers developed wherein alone his ever-growing perfection consists. Possession makes restful, indolent, proud.

"If God were to hold in his right hand all Truth, and in his left hand the single ever-active impulse to seek after Truth, even though with the condition that I must eternally remain in error, and to say to me, 'Choose!' I would with humility fall before his left hand and say, 'Father, give! For Pure Truth belongs to Thee alone!'" These words recall the famous, but somewhat overdrawn, *dictum* of his predecessor, Malebranche.

In another place, referring to the Quixotic attacks made upon him by Klotz and his reviewers, he says: "I am indeed no giant, but only a wind-mill. Here I stand, in my proper place, far away from the village, upon a hillock, quite alone. I approach no one and assist no one, nor do I allow any one to assist me. If there is grist for my millstones, I grind it, be the wind

what it may. All the thirty-two winds are my friends. Of the whole wide range of atmosphere I crave not an inch more than my sails require in order to revolve. Only they must be left perfectly free. Midgets may swarm to and fro between them; but mischievous boys must not try to pass beneath them at all times; still less must any one attempt to check their course with his hands, unless his strength be greater than that of the wind which impels me. If any one is hurled into the air by my sails, the fault is his own; nor can I set him down again with less force than that of his own fall."

We must not omit to call attention to Lessing's literary style. The spontaneous and artless beauties of German poetry, as shown, for example, in the works of Goethe and Heine, it would be hard to match in any other language. But German prose has always suffered, and still suffers, from a certain unwieldiness and circumlocution, which, considering the enormous compass of its vocabulary and the plasticity of the language as an instrument of style, must be largely ascribed to a want of taste and carelessness on the part of German writers. Lessing's great contemporary, Winckelmann, had already observed with displeasure that the majority of persons failed to understand that there could be such a thing as good German prose. He set himself to form his own style. Lessing, all of whose writings are clear and concise to a degree and devoid of any obscurity ("sa manière de voir est allemande, sa manière de s'exprimer

européenne"¹), did the same by following a precept which he had laid down at an early age. In a letter written to his sister in his fifteenth year he tells her: "Write as you speak, and you will write well." Since Lessing's time, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Heine, and others have also shown, by their prose writings, the fallacy of the belief that the German language does not lend itself to a good style. In Lessing's theoretical writings, such as, for example, the *Laocoon*, it will be noticed that he does not lead his readers directly towards results, but follows the various paths of opinion, counter-opinion, and doubt before finally arriving at a definite degree of certainty. We are thus shown the successive operations of his mind, as it were, instead of receiving at once broad views and important truths. Lessing's astonishing power of clear statement in argument, his readiness to detect a fallacy, and his delight in pursuing principles to their last issues, were attributed by Mr. James Sime to a large extent to his experience in grappling with geometrical problems. In speaking of the *Laocoon*, the writer just mentioned says: "If we except the best of Plato's dialogues, it would be difficult to name any book which gives opportunity for so much of the most valuable kind of mental gymnastic." Lessing's criticism was constructive throughout, and no better instances could be found in the various departments of literature and art than those afforded by his *Literaturbriefe*, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, and *Laocoon*.

¹ Madame de Staël.

Of the good things of this world Lessing had but a very small share. He was poor all his life. While he lived at Berlin he was already heavily in debt, when his father appealed to him for assistance, and it is sad to think that he was compelled to part with the whole of his splendid library of some six thousand volumes, which he had collected chiefly at Breslau. Yet despite his poverty, he was generous to a degree, and never refused his aid to a friend when it was in his power to grant it. His was not a happy life; indeed, happiness seldom falls to the lot of men of great genius. His admiration for his father and affection for his mother are well known; but he rarely saw his parents after he first left Kamenz. His married life, again, though so full of promise, was doomed to be of short duration. In the year 1776 he married Eva König, the widow of a Hamburg silk manufacturer, whose acquaintance he had made in that town. A lady of culture and refinement, she proved a worthy companion to Lessing, who lived very happily with her. In January 1778 Eva Lessing died in childbirth after a fortnight's illness. The child had only lived for twenty-four hours; on the 31st December 1777 Lessing wrote to Eschenburg:—

“I seize a moment when my wife lies quite unconscious, to thank you for your kind interest. My joy was but short. And I lost him so unwillingly—this son! For he had so much sense—so much sense! . . . Was it not sense that they had to drag him into the world with iron tongs? that he marked the wretchedness of it so soon? Was it not sense that he seized the first opportunity to escape from it?

And the little rascal tears his mother away with him. For there is still but little hope that she may be spared to me. I wanted at last to have as good a life of it as other men. But it has turned out badly for me."

And again on the 10th January:—

"My wife is dead, and I have now had this experience too. I am glad that few more such experiences can remain for me, and am quite calm."

Lessing was of an eminently social nature; but to be great, it has been said, is to be misunderstood. He was a great man, and his most intimate friends were unable to appreciate many of his ideas at their proper value; so that he remained, in one sense, a lonely man throughout his life. "Only one equally great," says Goethe, "could understand him; to mediocrity he was dangerous." But what was denied him in worldly happiness he has received in another and a nobler way; and so long as the German language is spoken, the name of Lessing will be honoured and revered as belonging to the man who founded the classical literature of his country and fought the hard fight of intellectual freedom, whilst the world at large will remember him as one of the most fearless and loyal votaries of Truth.

W. B. RÖNNFELDT.

NOTE.—In the present volume such of the notes as could be spared have been omitted. As Lessing himself points out in the Preface to his *Laocoon*, he added a number of notes which do not bear directly upon the context, but which he wished to preserve and had no more favourable opportunity of recording elsewhere.

LAOCOON;
OR,
ON THE LIMITS OF PAINTING
AND POETRY.

1766

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PREFACE TO LAOCOON.

THE first person who compared Painting and Poetry with each other was a man of refined feeling, who found that both of these arts produced a similar effect upon him. He noticed that they both represent absent things as if they were present, appearances as if they were realities; they both deceive, and the illusion is in both cases a pleasing one.

A second observer tried to penetrate to the inner source of this pleasure, and discovered that its origin is in both cases the same. Beauty, our conception of which we derive in the first place from bodily objects, has universal laws which are applicable to various things; to actions and thoughts as well as to forms.

A third, reflecting upon the value and distribution of these universal laws, noticed that some are more predominant in painting, others in poetry; and that therefore, in the latter case, poetry can assist painting, and in the former, painting can assist poetry, by means of explanations and illustrations.

The first was the amateur; the second the philosopher; and the third the critic.

The two former could hardly make a wrong use of either their feelings or their conclusions. As regards the observations of the critic, on the other hand, their main

value lies in correctly applying them to individual cases; and, seeing that there have always been fifty ingenious critics for one clear-sighted one, it would have been strange if this application had always been made with that caution which is required in order to hold the balance evenly between the two arts.

If Apelles and Protagoras, in their lost writings on painting, confirmed and illustrated its laws by reference to the already established laws of poetry, we may safely conclude that they did so with that moderation and accuracy, with which we now see Aristotle, Cicero, Horace and Quintilian apply, in their works, the theory and practice of painting to eloquence and poetry. It was the privilege of the Ancients in all matters to do neither too much nor too little.

But we moderns imagine that we have advanced far beyond them in many points by changing their small by-paths into highways, even though, by our so doing, the shorter and safer highways should dwindle down into paths such as lead through wildernesses.

The dazzling antithesis of the Greek Voltaire, that Painting is dumb poetry, and Poetry speaking painting, was surely never found in any instruction-book. It was one of those ideas held by Simonides, the truth of which is so obvious that one feels compelled to overlook the indistinctness and falsehood which accompany it.

The Ancients, however, did not overlook them. While, in fact, confining the saying of Simonides to the effect produced by either art, they did not forget to inculcate that, despite the perfect similarity of this effect, the two differed from each other both in the objects imitated and in their manner of imitation (*ὅλῃ καὶ τρόποις μιμήσεως*).

But of late many critics, just as though no such difference existed, have drawn the crudest conclusions one can imagine from this harmony of painting and poetry. At one time they force poetry into the narrower limits of painting; at another, they allow painting to occupy the whole wide sphere of poetry. Everything that is right for the one they would concede to the other also; everything that pleases, or displeases, in the one, is, according to them, necessarily pleasing or displeasing in the other. And in the fulness of this idea, they give vent in the most confident tones to the shallowest opinions, when, in the works of a poet and a painter on the same subject, they set down as faults any divergences they may find to exist; which divergences they lay to the charge of the one or the other, accordingly as they have more taste for poetry or for painting.

Indeed, this pseudo-criticism has misled to some extent even the professional artists. In poetry it led to the love of description, and in painting to allegory: of the former, men tried to make a speaking painting, without properly knowing what it could and ought to paint; the latter they strove to reduce to a dumb poem, nor did they consider to what extent it could express general ideas without leaving its proper province and degenerating into an arbitrary method of writing.

To counteract this false taste and these unsound judgments is the chief aim of the following treatise. It originated in a casual manner, and owed its growth more to the nature of my reading than to the methodical development of general principles. It forms, therefore, rather a series of rough notes for a book than a book itself.

Yet I flatter myself that even as such it will not be

wholly deserving of contempt. Systematic books we Germans by no means lack. And we understand as well as any nation in the world, how to deduce everything we wish in the most beautiful order from a few accepted explanations of words.

Baumgarten acknowledged his indebtedness to Gesner's Dictionary for a large portion of the examples in his work on æsthetics. If my reasoning is not so cogent as Baumgarten's, my illustrations at least will taste more of the wellspring.

As I have taken the Laocoon for my starting-point, so to speak, and returned to it on several occasions, I thought it well to select this name for the title. Other short digressions on various points of ancient art contribute less to my purpose, and I have only inserted them here because I saw no prospect of finding a more suitable place for them.

I must also point out that under the name of painting I include the plastic arts in general; and, in the same way, I claim the right to understand by the name of poetry also those other arts in which the method of imitation is progressive.

LAOCOON.



CHAPTER I.

THE distinctive characteristic of all the Greek masterpieces of painting and sculpture is said by Herr Winckelmann to consist in a noble simplicity and calm grandeur, displayed in the posture as well as in the expression. "As the depths of the sea," he says,¹ "always remain calm, however much its surface be disturbed, so the expression in the figures of the Greeks, under every form of passion, reveals a great and collected soul.

"Such a soul is portrayed in the countenance of Laocoon, and not in the countenance alone, under the intensest suffering. The pain which is betokened in every muscle and sinew of his body, and which we almost imagine we ourselves feel on merely beholding the agonised contraction of the abdomen, without looking at the face and the other parts: this pain, I say, is nevertheless displayed without any violent stress, both in the face and in the whole attitude. He raises no terrible shriek, as does Virgil's Laocoon; the opening of the mouth does not admit of it; it is rather an anxious and suppressed sigh, as described by Sadoletto. The

¹ *Von d. Nachahmung der gr. Werke i. d. Malerei u. Bildhauerkunst*, pp. 21, 22.

bodily pain and the greatness of soul are, as it were, weighed out and distributed with equal force through the whole frame of the figure. Laocoon suffers, but he suffers like the Philoctetes of Sophocles: his misery pierces us to the soul, but we wish that we could endure misery like that great man.

“The expression of so great a soul far exceeds the painting of beautiful nature. The artist must have felt within himself that strength of spirit which he imprinted upon his marble. Greece possessed artists and philosophers in one and the same person, and had more than one Metrodorus. Philosophy gave her hand to Art, and breathed into the figures of the latter more than ordinary souls.”

The observation on which the foregoing remarks are founded—viz., that pain is not portrayed in the countenance of Laocoon with that stress which its intensity would lead us to expect, is a perfectly correct one. Nor can it be disputed that this very point, which would lead the half-connoisseur to conclude that the artist had fallen short of nature and had not reached the true pathos of pain, serves most of all to render his wisdom conspicuous. Only, with regard to the grounds on which Winckelmann bases this wisdom and the universality of the rule which he deduces therefrom, do I venture to hold a different opinion.

I confess that the glance of disapproval which he casts upon Virgil, first startled me; this was followed by his comparison of Philoctetes. I will take this as my starting-point and write down my thoughts in the order in which they were developed in me.

“Laocoon suffers like the Philoctetes of Sophocles.” How does the latter suffer? It is strange that his

sufferings should have left such different impressions upon us. The cries, the shrieks, the wild imprecations, with which his pain filled the camp and interrupted all the sacrifices and sacred rites, resounded no less horribly through the desert island; and these it was that caused him to be banished thither. These same sounds of dejection, misery and despair, were, by the poet in his imitation, made to fill the theatre. The third act of this play has been observed to be shorter than the others. This shows, say the critics, that the Ancients troubled themselves little about preserving an equal length in the different acts. I agree with them, but I would rather base my opinion upon another example than this. The sorrowful exclamations, the moaning, the interrupted $\bar{\alpha}$, $\bar{\alpha}$, $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\nu$, $\acute{\alpha}\tau\tau\alpha\tau\alpha\iota$, $\tilde{\omega}$ $\mu\omicron\iota$ $\mu\omicron\iota$ / the whole lines full of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha$, $\pi\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha$, of which this act consists, pronounced, as they were, with tensions and pauses altogether different from those required in a continuous speech, no doubt served to make this act quite as long in the representation as the others. On paper it appears far shorter to the reader than it must have done to those who heard it performed.

A cry is the natural expression of bodily pain. Homer's wounded warriors frequently fall with cries to the ground. Venus, upon receiving a mere scratch, cries out aloud;¹ he makes her do this, not that he may thus paint her as the weakly goddess of pleasure, but rather that he may give suffering nature her due. For even brazen Mars, when he feels the spear of Diomedes, shrieks as horribly as if ten thousand warriors were furiously shouting, and fills both armies with terror.²

Far as Homer in other respects raises his heroes above

¹ *Iliad*, v. 343.

² *Iliad*, v. 859.

human nature, they yet remain true to it in the matter of feeling pain and insult, and of expressing the same by means of cries, tears, or invective. In their actions they are beings of a higher order; in their feelings they are true men.

I know that we more refined Europeans, belonging to a wiser after-age, know better how to keep our mouths and our eyes under control. Politeness and propriety will not permit us to cry and weep. The active bravery of the first rough ages has with us been changed into a passive. Even our own ancestors were greater in the latter than in the former; and yet they were barbarians. To stifle all pain, to face the stroke of death with unflinching eye, to die laughing under the bites of adders, to lament neither one's sins nor the loss of one's dearest friend: these were the characteristics of the old northern heroism. Palnatoki commanded his Jomsburgers to fear nothing and never even to mention the word Fear.

Not so the Greek. He felt and feared; he gave expression to his pains and to his sorrows. He felt no shame for any human weaknesses, only he would allow none of them to restrain him in the pursuit of honour or the fulfilment of his duty. What in the barbarian sprang from hardihood and ferocity, was effected in the Greek through principle. With him, heroism was as the spark concealed in the flint, which, so long as no external force awakens it, sleeps in quiet without depriving the stone of either its clearness or its coldness. With the barbarian, heroism was a bright, devouring flame, ever raging and blackening, if not consuming, every other good quality which he possessed. When, therefore, Homer makes the Trojans march to battle with wild cries, the Greeks, on the contrary, in resolute silence, the commentators

justly observe that by this means the poet wished to portray the former as barbarians and the latter as a civilised people. I am surprised that in another passage they have not discovered a similar characteristic contrast.¹ The hostile armies have proclaimed a truce; they are engaged in burning their dead, this occupation being accompanied on both sides with hot tears: δάκρυα θέρμα χέοντες. But Priam forbids his Trojans to weep: οὐδ' εἴα κλαίειν Πρίαμος μέγας. He forbids them to weep, says Mme. Dacier, because he fears that this may soften them too much and diminish their courage for the fight on the morrow. True; but I ask, why should Priam alone fear this? Why does not Agamemnon also lay the same prohibition on the Greeks? The poet's meaning is a deeper one. He wants to teach us that only the civilised Greek could weep and yet at the same time maintain his courage, whereas the uncivilised Trojan, in order to achieve this, would previously have to stifle all human feelings. Νεμέσσομαι γε μεν οὐδὲν κλαίειν, he makes the intelligent son of wise Nestor say in another passage.²

It is a remarkable thing that, among the few tragedies which have been handed down to us from antiquity, there are two in which bodily pain constitutes not the least of the ills borne by the suffering hero. Besides the Philoctetes there is the dying Hercules. This latter also is represented by Sophocles as complaining and moaning, crying and shrieking. Thanks to those masters of propriety, our polite neighbours, a moaning Philoctetes or a shrieking Hercules would to-day be considered a most ridiculous and insufferable personage on the stage. One of their latest poets³ has, it is true, ventured upon a

¹ *Iliad*, vii. 421.

² *Odyssey*, iv. 195.

³ Chateaubrun.

Philoctetes. But would he have dared to show them the true Philoctetes?

Even a Laocoon has been discovered among the lost plays of Sophocles. Would that Fate had preserved it for us! The scanty references made to it by some old grammarians do not enable us to conclude how the poet dealt with this subject. But of this I am certain, that he must have represented Laocoon with as little stoicism as Philoctetes and Hercules. All stoicism is undramatic; and our pity is always proportioned to the amount of suffering displayed by the object which claims our interest. If we see him bearing his distress with magnanimity, this magnanimity will, it is true, call forth our admiration; but admiration is a cold emotion, and inactive amazement excludes every warmer passion and clear conception.

And now I come to the conclusion of my argument. If it be true that a cry at the sensation of bodily pain, especially after the old Greek manner of thinking, is compatible with greatness of soul: then the desire of expressing such a soul cannot have been the cause which deterred the artist from imitating this shriek on his marble, but there must be another reason why he differs on this point from his rival, the poet, who expresses this shriek with the highest purpose.

CHAPTER II.

BE it fable or history that Love made the first attempt in the plastic arts, this much is certain, that Love never wearied of guiding the hands of the great masters of old. For, although to-day Painting, as the art which copies objects upon a flat surface, is in general practised throughout its fullest range, yet the wise Greeks assigned to it far narrower limits, and confined it to the imitation of beautiful objects only. Their artists portrayed nothing but the beautiful; even the commonly beautiful or beauty of a lower order they only copied occasionally for practice or for recreation. Their works gave delight because of the perfection of the objects themselves; and they were too great to demand that their beholders should be satisfied with the mere cold pleasure which might arise from a successful resemblance or an appreciation of their skill. In their art nothing was so dear to them, nothing seemed so noble to them, as to pursue it for its own sake.

“Who will desire to paint thee, since none will look at thee?” said an old epigrammatist, in speaking of an extremely ill-favoured person. Many a modern artist would say: “However ill-favoured thou art, I will yet paint thee. Though none should care to look at thee, they will nevertheless look with pleasure upon my picture; not because it represents thee, but in so far as

it will be a proof of my skill which can so faithfully reproduce such a monster."

The propensity to such wanton boasting on the part of persons of tolerable abilities, not ennobled by the value of the subjects represented, is too natural, it is true, for even the Greeks not to have had their Pauson and their Pyraeicus. They had them; but they dealt with them strictly according to their deserts. Pauson, who was sunk even below the beautiful of common nature, whose low taste loved to give expression to all that is faulty and ugly in the human form, lived in the most contemptible poverty. And Pyraeicus, who painted barbers' rooms, dirty workshops, donkeys, and kitchen herbs, with all the zeal of a Dutch artist, as though these things were by nature so attractive and rarely to be seen, received the nickname of the Rhyparographer, or "Dirt-Painter,"¹ although luxurious men of wealth purchased his works for their weight in gold, as though to redeem their worthlessness even by this imaginary value.

The state itself did not consider it beneath its dignity to compel the artist to remain in his proper sphere. The law of the Thebans, bidding him to idealise the beautiful in his works, and prohibiting him from lowering the standard of beauty, is well known. This was no law against bunglers, which many writers, including even Junius,² have imagined it to be. It was in condemnation of the Greek Ghezzi, of that ignoble device of producing a resemblance by the exaggeration of the uglier parts of the original.

The same sense of beauty gave rise to the regulation

¹ Plinius, xxx. 37; Edit. Hard.

² *De Pictura vet.*, lib. ii. cap. 4.

of the *Hellanoδικαί*.¹ Every Olympian victor received a statue; but only to the thrice-victorious was a portrait-statue erected.² Works of art were not allowed to include too many indifferent portraits. For, though a portrait also admits of the ideal, yet the likeness is of prior importance; it is the ideal of an individual man, and not the ideal of man in the abstract.

We laugh when we are told that, among the Ancients, even the arts were subjected to municipal laws. But we are not always in the right when we laugh. No one, of course, will deny that the law must place no manner of hindrance in the way of knowledge, for the aim of knowledge is truth. Truth is necessary to the soul; and it becomes tyranny to impose the least constraint upon it in the gratification of this essential need. The aim of art, on the other hand, is pleasure, and pleasure is not indispensable. It may, therefore, fitly be left to the law-giver to decide what kind of pleasure, and what degree of each kind, he will allow.

The plastic arts especially, in addition to their infallible influence upon the national character, are capable of producing an effect which requires the closest attention of the law. As men produced beautiful statues, so the latter in their turn reacted upon the former, and the state became indebted to beautiful statues for beautiful men. With us, however, the delicate power of imagination on the part of the mothers seems to show itself only in the production of monsters.

From this point of view I think I can detect some truth in certain old stories, which are generally rejected

¹ *Ἑλλανοδίκαι*: The judges who presided over the Olympic Games.

² *Ἀγαλμα ἐκωνικόν*. Plinius, xxxiv. 9.

as pure inventions. The mothers of Aristomenes, Aristodamas, Alexander the Great, Scipio, Augustus, and Galerius, all dreamt, during their pregnancy, that they had intercourse with a serpent. The serpent was a symbol of divinity, and the beautiful statues and paintings of Bacchus, Apollo, Mercury, or Hercules, were seldom without one. These honourable matrons had by day feasted their eyes upon the god, and their confused dreams at night recalled the form of the reptile. Thus I at the same time maintain the dream, and dispose of the interpretation placed upon it by the pride of their sons and the shamelessness of flatterers. For there must be a reason why this adulterous phantasy should always have taken the form of a serpent.

But I am digressing. All I wished to show was, that with the ancients, beauty was the highest law of the plastic arts. And this having been shown to be the case, it necessarily follows that everything else that lies at the same time within the range of the plastic arts, must, if not consistent with beauty, give way to it; and, if consistent, must at least be subservient to it.

I will abide by my expression. There are passions and degrees of passion, which display themselves in the face by the most hideous contortions, and throw the whole body into such forced positions that the beautiful lines, which cover its surface when at rest, entirely disappear. The ancient artists, therefore, either avoided these emotions altogether, or reduced them to that lower degree in which they preserve a certain measure of beauty.

Rage and despair never marred their works. I will even maintain that they have never represented a Fury.

Indignation they reduced to seriousness. With the

poet, it was the indignant Jupiter who hurled the lightning; with the artist, it was only the serious one.

Grief was softened down into sadness. And where this could not be done, in a case where grief would have been as lowering as disfiguring, what did Timanthes do? His painting of the sacrifice of Iphigenia is well known. He therein represents all the bystanders with the requisite degree of sadness which becomes them; the father's countenance, however, which should have exhibited it in the very highest degree, is hidden. Upon this many clever remarks have been passed. He had, says one,¹ so exhausted his powers in imparting a fitting expression of sadness to the faces of the others, that he despaired of being able to represent the father with a still more sorrowful face. He thus acknowledged, says another,² that a father's anguish under such circumstances surpasses all expression. I, for my part, see no signs here of incapacity on the part of either the artist or his art. The lines of the countenance vary with the degree of passion to which they correspond; passion in its highest degree throws them into the greatest prominence, and nothing is easier in art than to represent them thus. But Timanthes knew the limits which the Graces had set to his art. He knew that the grief which became Agamemnon, as a father, must have been displayed by such distortions as are at all times unsightly. He carried the expression of such a feeling as far as he could combine beauty and dignity with it. He would fain have passed over or softened what was ugly in it; but, as the nature of his work would allow him to do neither, what was left to him but to conceal it? What he might not paint he left to conjecture. In short, this concealment

¹ Plinius, xxxv. 35.

² Valerius Maximus, viii. 11.

is a sacrifice which the artist made to beauty. It is an instance, not how expression may exceed the bounds of art, but how it should be subjected to the first law of art—namely, the law of beauty.

Now, if we apply this to the Laocoon, the principle which I am seeking becomes clear. The master aimed at the highest beauty compatible with the adopted circumstances of bodily pain. The latter, with all its violent contortions, could not be combined with the former, and he therefore had to modify it. He had to soften down the shrieks into sighs: not because a shriek discloses an ignoble soul, but because it distorts the countenance in a hideous manner. For only think of Laocoon with his mouth forced open, and imagine the effect! Let him shriek, and look at him! Instead of a form which inspires compassion by displaying beauty and pain at once, it has now become a thing of horror, from which we gladly turn our eyes, for the sight of pain excites annoyance, nor can the beauty of the suffering object change this annoyance into the sweet feeling of pity.

The mere wide opening of the mouth—leaving aside the forced and disagreeable distortions, which would be produced in the other parts of the face—is, in painting, a spot, and, in sculpture, a cavity, both of which produce the worst possible effect. Montfaucon showed little taste in setting down an old, bearded head, with gaping mouth, as Jupiter delivering oracles.¹ Must a god shout when he discloses the future? Would a pleasing outline of the mouth cast suspicion on his utterance? Nor do I believe Valerius when he says that Ajax, in the painting by Timanthes, which he describes, was re-

¹ *Antiquit. Expl.*, vol. i. p. 50.

presented as shrieking. Even far inferior masters, at a time when art had already fallen into decay, never thought of allowing the wildest barbarians, when seized with terror and fears of death beneath the victor's sword, to open their mouths and shriek.

It is certain that this softening down of extreme bodily suffering to a lower degree of intensity, was resorted to in several ancient works of art. The suffering Hercules in the poisoned garment, by an old unknown master, was not the Hercules of Sophocles, whose shrieks were so horrible that the Locrian rocks and Eubœan promontories resounded with them. He was gloomy rather than wild.¹ The Philoctetes of Pythagoras Leontinus seemed to impart his pain to the beholder, an effect which the least trace of ugliness would have destroyed. It may be asked, how I know that this master made a statue of Philoctetes. From a passage in Pliny, which is so manifestly defective or mutilated that my emendation should scarcely have been awaited.²

¹ Plinius, xxxiv. 19.

² "Eundem" (namely, Myro), we read in Pliny (xxxiv. 19), "*vicit et Pythagoras Leontinus, qui fecit stadiodromon Astylon, qui Olympiæ ostenditur: et Libyn puerum tenentem tabulam, eodem loco, et mala ferentem nudum. Syracusis autem claudicantem: cujus hulceris dolorem sentire etiam spectantes videntur.*" Let us consider the last words carefully. They clearly refer to some one who is known to all on account of a painful ulcer, "*cujus hulceris,*" etc. Is this "*cujus*" to refer to the mere "*claudicantem,*" and the latter to be taken as possibly agreeing with a "*puerum*" mentioned in a preceding clause? No one would be better known, on account of such an ulcer, than Philoctetes. I therefore read "*Philoctetem*" in place of "*claudicantem,*" or at least consider that the former word, on account of its resemblance in sound to the latter, has slipped out, and that we should read "*Philoctetem claudicantem.*" Sophocles speaks of his *στίβον κατ' ἀνάγκαν ἔρπειν*: and he must have limped, since he could not walk as firmly with his diseased foot as with the other.

CHAPTER III

Now, as already mentioned, the limits of art have, in modern times, been far more widely extended. Its aim, we are told, is to imitate the whole of visible nature, whereof the beautiful forms but a small part. Truth and expression should be its first law; and as nature herself invariably sacrifices beauty to a higher purpose, so also must the artist subordinate it to his general design, and not pursue it further than truth and expression allow him. For it is enough that, through truth and expression, what is ugly in nature is changed into a beauty of art.

Even assuming that, for the present, these ideas, whether they be of value or not, remain undisputed: will there not occur other considerations, independent of these, which should lead the artist to place certain limits on expression, and never to represent it in its highest intensity?

I think that the fact that all imitations of art are, by its material limits, confined to a single moment, will lead us to similar views.

The artist can never seize from ever-changing nature more than one single moment, and the painter, in particular, can only make use of this moment from one point of view; their works are, however, intended not to be merely glanced at, but to be long and repeatedly

contemplated. It is therefore clear that too much care cannot be exercised in choosing happily that single moment and the point of view, from which that moment is seized. But that alone is a happy choice which allows free play to the imagination. The more we gaze, the more must our imagination add; and the more our imagination adds, the more we must believe that we see. Now in the whole course of an emotion there is no moment which offers this to so little advantage as its climax. There is nothing higher beyond this, and to present the extreme to the eye, is to clip the wings of fancy, and to compel her, since she cannot get beyond the impression of the senses, to seek lower and weaker images wherewith to occupy herself, shunning, as her limit, the visible fulness of expression. Thus, if Laocoon sighs, the imagination can hear him shriek. But if he shrieks, it can neither rise a step above, nor descend a step below this representation, without beholding him in a more endurable, and consequently less interesting, condition. It either hears him merely moaning or sees him already dead.

Furthermore, this single moment receives an unchangeable duration through art; it must therefore express nothing that can only be thought of as transitory. To all appearances, our conception of which essentially involves the idea that they suddenly break forth into being, and as suddenly vanish again, that they can only remain as they are for a moment,—to all such appearances, be they pleasing or the reverse, art, by prolonging them, imparts such an unnatural character, that at each succeeding glance, the impression which they make grows weaker and weaker, and in the end the whole object disgusts or horrifies us. La Mettrie, who

allowed himself to be painted and engraved as a second Democritus, laughs only the first few times that we see him. Look at him oftener, and the philosopher changes into a fool: his laugh becomes a simper. Similarly with regard to shrieks. The intense suffering, which gives rise to them, soon either abates or destroys the sufferer altogether. Even the most patient and resolute of men, therefore, if he shrieks, will not do so incessantly. And it is only this seeming incessancy, involved in the material imitation of art, which turns his shrieks into effeminate weakness or childish petulance. This at least the artist of the Laocoon had to avoid, even if the shrieking had not marred the beauty of the work, and even had his art allowed him to express suffering without beauty.

Among the painters of old, Timomachus seems to have had a preference for depicting subjects that displayed extreme passion. His raging Ajax, his child-murdering Medea, were celebrated paintings. But the descriptions we possess of them point clearly to the fact that he thoroughly understood, and knew how to combine, that point at which the beholder imagines rather than sees the climax, with that appearance with which the idea of transitoriness is not so closely connected as to produce a displeasing impression by its continuance in art. He did not depict Medea at the moment when she is actually murdering her children, but a few moments earlier, whilst motherly love and jealousy are contending within her for the mastery. We foresee the end of this contest. We tremble in the anticipation of soon beholding only the cruel Medea, and our imagination carries us far beyond anything which the painter could show us at that terrible moment. But, for this

very reason, Medea's irresolution, which art has rendered perpetual, nowise offends us, for we would rather that it had actually happened thus, and that the contest of passions had never been decided, or had, at least, continued until time and reflection had assuaged her wrath and allowed her maternal feelings to prevail. This wisdom on the part of Timomachus has called forth loud and frequent praise, and raised him far above another unknown painter, who had been so foolish as to represent Medea at the height of her frenzy, thus imparting to this transient, momentary climax a duration contrary to all that is natural. The poet,¹ censuring him on this account, says very sensibly, addressing the figure itself: "Art thou, then, ever thirsting for the blood of thy children? Is there ever a new Jason, a new Creusa there, to exasperate thee unceasingly?—Away with thee, even in the painting!" he adds, in a tone of indignation.

Of the raging Ajax of Timomachus we can judge from the account of Philostratus.² Ajax was not represented raging among the herds and binding and slaughtering oxen and rams instead of men. No; that master painted him sitting, wearied with these heroic exploits of insanity, and conceiving the design of self-destruction. This is really the raging Ajax; not that he is raging at that very moment, but because we can see that he has been raging, and can most vividly imagine the intensity of his frenzy from the despair and shame which he himself feels at the thought of it. We see the storm in the wreckage and corpses which it has cast upon the strand.

¹ Philippus (*Anthol.*, lib. iv. cap. 9, ep. 10).

² *Vita Apoll.*, lib. ii. cap. 22.

CHAPTER IV.

UPON examining the reasons alleged for the sculptor of the Laocoon being obliged to exercise moderation in the expression of bodily pain, I find that they are all to be attributed to the essential nature of his art and its inherent exigencies and limitations. They would therefore hardly be applicable to poetry.

Without attempting here to decide how far the poet can succeed in describing physical beauty, it will not be disputed that, as the whole infinite realm of perfection lies open to his imitation, this visible garb, in which perfection becomes beauty, forms but one of the least of the means by which he can awaken our interest in his characters. He often neglects to make use of this means at all, feeling assured that, if his hero has won our regard, his nobler qualities will either engage our attention to such a degree that we shall bestow no thought on his bodily form; or that, if we do think of it, they will so far prepossess us that we shall, in our own minds, attribute to him an exterior, if not beautiful, at least not displeasing. At any rate, he will not allow himself to pay any regard to the sense of sight, in any single trait that is not expressly intended to appeal to that sense. When Virgil's Laocoon shrieks, does it occur to any one that a widely opened mouth is required

for shrieking, and that such a mouth is ugly? It suffices that *clamores horrendos ad sidera tollit* produces a powerful effect upon the ear, be its impression upon the eye what it may. And if any one here feels the want of a beautiful picture, the poet's whole effect is lost upon him.

The poet, moreover, is nowise compelled to concentrate his description into the space of a single moment. He may take up any individual action at will from its source and carry it on, through every possible variation, to its close. These variations, each of which would, in the case of the artist, need a separate work, require but a single trait at the hands of the poet; and though this trait, if taken by itself, might offend the hearer's imagination, preparation would either be made for it by what preceded, or it would be softened down and counteracted by what follows it, in such a manner that it loses its solitary impression, and, by this combination, produces the best possible effect. Assuming, therefore, that it were really unbecoming in a man to shriek while suffering intense pain: how could this slight, momentary impropriety prejudice us against one whose other virtues have already enlisted our sympathy? Virgil's Laocoon shrieks, but this shrieking Laocoon is the very same whom we already know and love as the most considerate of patriots and the most affectionate of fathers. We ascribe his shrieking, not to his character, but solely to his insupportable suffering. This, and nothing more, is what we hear in his shrieks, and by them alone could the poet have represented it to us in a vivid manner.

Who, then, will still censure him? Who would not rather admit that, if the artist did well in not allowing

his Laocoon to shriek, the poet acted equally wisely in letting him do so?

But Virgil is here merely a narrative poet; would his justification include the dramatic poet also? The account of a person's shriek produces one kind of impression; the shriek itself produces another. The drama, designed, as it is, for the living art of the actor, should perhaps for that very reason confine itself more strictly within the limits of material art. For we there not merely imagine that we see and hear a shrieking Philoctetes, but we actually do see and hear him. The nearer the actor approaches to nature, the more susceptible will our eyes and ears be offended; for it is indisputable that this is the case in actual life when we hear and perceive loud and intense expressions of pain. Moreover, bodily pain is as a rule not capable of arousing our compassion to the same extent as other misfortunes. Our imagination can distinguish too little in it for the mere sight of it to awaken feelings, in any way equivalent, in ourselves. Sophocles, therefore, might easily have committed an impropriety, not merely a conventional one, but one founded on the very existence of our feelings, by allowing Philoctetes and Hercules thus to moan and cry, shriek and howl. The bystanders in the scene cannot possibly share their sufferings to the extent which these unmeasured outbursts seem to demand. To us, beholding them, they will by comparison appear cold, and yet we cannot but regard their compassion as the measure of our own. Be it added that the actor can with difficulty, if at all, carry the representation of bodily pain to the extent of a perfect illusion, and our modern dramatists may perhaps be deserving rather of praise than of blame, for having either avoided this rock

entirely, or at any rate doubled it in but a light craft.

How much would, in theory, appear incontrovertible, had not genius succeeded in proving the reverse by fact. None of the foregoing considerations are unfounded; yet, notwithstanding this, the *Philoctetes* remains one of the masterpieces of the stage. For some of them do not apply to Sophocles, and it was only by rising superior to the remaining ones that he attained to beauties whereof the timid critic, without this example, would never have dreamt. The following remarks will make my meaning clearer:—

1. How wonderfully the poet understood how to strengthen and enlarge the idea of bodily suffering! He chose a wound—(for the circumstances of the story may also be considered as having depended on his choice, inasmuch as it was for the sake of these circumstances, so favourable to him, that he selected the whole story)—he chose, I say, a wound, and not an internal malady, because the former admits of a more vivid representation than the latter, however painful. The inward sympathetic fire which consumed Meleager, when his mother sacrificed him to her sisterly rage, by means of the fatal brand, would therefore be less dramatic than a wound. And this wound was, moreover, a divine punishment. Within it, a supernatural poison raged unceasingly, accompanied at periodical intervals by a yet more violent attack of pain, after which the unhappy man always fell into a stupefying sleep, thus giving exhausted nature time to recover strength to tread once more the same path of suffering. Chateaubrun causes him to be wounded merely by the poisoned arrow of a Trojan. How can any extraordinary issue be expected

from so common an occurrence? In the wars of old every man was exposed to it; how came it, then, that its consequences were so terrible in the case of Philoctetes alone? Besides, a natural poison, that can operate for nine whole years without killing, is far more improbable than all the fabulous wonders with which the Greek has adorned his piece.

2. But, great and terrible as Sophocles made the bodily sufferings of his hero, he yet felt full well that they were, of themselves, insufficient to excite any marked degree of sympathy. He therefore combined them with other evils, which, taken by themselves, would not move us greatly, but which, from this combination, received the same melancholy colouring which they in turn imparted to the bodily pain. These evils were: complete isolation from all human society, hunger and all the hardships of life to which one is exposed in such isolation and under an inclement sky. If we imagine a man in these circumstances, granting him health, strength, and industry, we have a Robinson Crusoe, who, though his fate be not indifferent to us, yet certainly has little claim upon our pity. For we are seldom so contented with human society that the tranquillity, which may be enjoyed apart from it, would not appear to us very attractive; especially under the idea, which flatters every individual, that in course of time he could learn to dispense with the aid of others. On the other hand, suppose a man to be afflicted with the most painful, incurable disease, but at the same time surrounded by kind friends, who allow him to suffer no want, who alleviate his misfortune as far as it lies in their power to do so, and before whom he freely vents his complaints and sorrows. Undeniably we shall pity him, but this

pity will not be of long duration; we shall at last shrug our shoulders and recommend him to have patience. It is only when both these cases are combined,—when, in his solitude, he is moreover not master of his own body; when the sufferer derives as little help from others as he can render himself, and his lamentations are lost upon the desert air—then it is that we see the sum of the evils which can afflict humanity, overtaking him, and every passing thought, in which we put ourselves in his place, arouses dread and horror. We see before us nought but despair in its most terrible form, and no sympathy is stronger or stirs our whole soul more deeply than that which is founded on the idea of despair. Of this kind is the sympathy which we feel for Philoctetes, and we feel it most strongly at the moment when we behold him bereft of his bow, his only means of prolonging his distressful life. Oh, the Frenchman who had no understanding to consider this, no heart to feel it! Or, if he had, was paltry enough to sacrifice it all to the wretched taste of his nation! Chateaubrun gives Philoctetes companions. He lets a young princess come to the hero in his desert island. Nor is she alone; her lady-in-waiting accompanies her, of which thing I am uncertain as to whether the princess or the poet needed it more. The powerful incident of the bow he has omitted. In its place he gives us the play of beautiful eyes. Certainly a bow and arrows would have afforded great amusement to the heroic youth of France. On the other hand, nothing is more serious, to their minds, than the scorn of beautiful eyes. The Greek tortures us with harrowing apprehensions that the unfortunate Philoctetes will be forced to remain upon the desert island without his bow and miserably perish. The Frenchman knows a surer

way to our hearts; he makes us fear that the son of Achilles may have to depart without his princess. This the Parisian critics called triumphing over the Ancients, and one of them suggested that Chateaubrun's piece be called "La difficulté vaincue."¹

3. After considering the effect of the whole piece, let us look at the single scenes, where Philoctetes is no longer the deserted sufferer, but has hopes of soon leaving the cheerless desert island and returning to his own kingdom—where, in fine, his whole misfortune is centred in his painful wound. He moans and shrieks, his body is seized with the most horrible convulsions. Against this the objection of offended propriety is properly urged. This objection was raised by an Englishman—that is to say, by a man who would hardly be suspected of false delicacy. As already hinted, he gives a very good reason for doing so. All feelings and passions, he says, with which others can but little sympathise, become offensive if expressed with too much intensity.² "It is for the same reason that to cry out with bodily pain, how intolerable soever, appears always unmanly and unbecoming. There is, however, a good deal of sympathy even with bodily pain. If, as has already been observed, I see a stroke aimed, and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, I naturally shrink and draw back my own leg or my own arm: and when it does fall, I feel it in some measure, and am hurt by it as well as the sufferer. My hurt, however, is no doubt excessively slight, and, upon that account, if he makes any violent outcry, as I cannot go along with him, I never fail to despise him."

¹ *Mercur de France*, April 1755, p. 177.

² Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, part i. sec. ii. ch. i.

Nothing is more misleading than laying down general laws for our feelings. They are so finely interwoven and complicated, that it is scarcely possible, even for the most careful of observers, to take up clearly a single thread and follow it up amid all the others that cross it. And if he does succeed in doing so, what advantage is thereby gained? There are in nature no simple unmixed feelings; together with each one there arise a thousand others, the least of which is sufficient to alter entirely the primary feeling, thus leading to greater and greater complexity, so that at last what was supposed to be a general law is reduced to a mere experience of a few single cases. We despise him, says the Englishman, whom we hear crying out violently with bodily pain. But not always: not the first time; not if we see that the sufferer is doing his utmost to conquer his pain; not if we know him to be in other respects a man of resolution; still less if, at the very time of his suffering, he shows signs of his resoluteness, if we see that his pain, while indeed causing him to cry out, yet does not force him to anything further, and that he submits to a continuance of it rather than change his thoughts or alter his determination in the slightest degree, even though such an alteration bid fair to bring his sufferings entirely to a conclusion. We find all this in Philoctetes. With the Greeks, moral greatness consisted in an equally undying love of one's friends and immutable hatred of one's foes. This greatness Philoctetes maintains throughout all his tortures. His suffering has not drained his eyes of tears to such an extent as to prevent him from weeping over the fate of his former friends. It has not made him so submissive that, in order to escape from it, he could pardon his foes and allow himself to be used for all their selfish ends. And

this rock of a man is one whom the Athenians should have despised, because the waves which could not shake him, at least make him resound? I confess, I care little for Cicero's philosophy in general, and least of all for that portion of it which he displays in the second Book of his Tusculan Disputations, on the endurance of bodily pain. One would think that he wanted to train a gladiator, so eagerly does he oppose all external expression of suffering. This betokens to him, apparently, nothing more than a want of patience, nor does he seem to consider that, though it often is entirely voluntary, yet true bravery, also, shows itself in voluntary actions only. He only hears the cries and shrieks of Sophocles' Philoctetes, and entirely overlooks his other resolute qualities. How else would he have had the opportunity of making his rhetorical onslaught upon the poets? "They would make us effeminate by introducing the bravest men weeping." They must let them weep; for a theatre is not an arena. It behoved the condemned or mercenary combatant to do and suffer everything with propriety. Not a sound of complaint must escape his lips, not a convulsive start reveal his pain. His wounds, and even his death, were intended to afford delight to the spectators, and he therefore had to learn the art of entirely concealing his feelings. The slightest display of them would have awakened compassion, and compassion, if frequently excited, would soon have made an end of these cold and cruel spectacles. Now the very effect which was there avoided, the tragic stage has for its principal aim, and here, therefore, a directly opposite line of conduct is demanded. Its heroes must display their feelings, must give utterance to their pain, and let nature follow her ordinary course within them. If they betray any signs

of training and forced effort, they fail to reach our hearts; and prize-fighters in the *cothurnus* can at the most but excite our wonder. This epithet may be applied to all the characters in the so-called tragedies of Seneca, and I am firmly convinced that the gladiatorial contests formed the principal cause why the Romans remained so far below mediocrity in the Tragic Art. The spectators learnt, in the bloody amphitheatre, to misconceive all that is natural; a Ctesias, perhaps, could study his art there, but a Sophocles never. The most tragic of geniuses, inured to these artificial scenes of death, would have degenerated into bombast and rodomontade. But as such rodomontade cannot inspire true heroism, so neither can the sorrow of a Philoctetes inspire weakness. The sorrows are those of a man, but the actions those of a hero. Together, they make the human hero, who is neither weak nor yet obdurate, but rather appears now the former, now the latter, according as nature or his principles of duty may require. His is the highest character that wisdom can produce or art imitate.

4. Not only has Sophocles preserved his sensitive hero from contempt, but he has also wisely provided against any other objection which the Englishman's observation might cause to be raised against him. For, although we may not always despise a man who cries out with bodily pain, yet it cannot be denied that we do not feel so much pity for him as his cries would appear to demand. What attitude, then, are those actors to assume who have to deal with the crying Philoctetes? Ought they to appear deeply moved? This would be contrary to nature. Or should they appear as cold and embarrassed as one usually is in such cases? This would produce a most disagreeable and incongruous

effect upon the spectator. Now this also, as mentioned, Sophocles has guarded against. He did so by furnishing the subsidiary characters with an individual interest, so that the impression made upon them by the cries of Philoctetes does not form the only thing with which they are occupied; and the spectator's attention is directed, not so much towards the disproportion of their sympathy to these cries, but rather to the change which, through this sympathy, however strong or weak the latter may be, is, or should be, effected in their own sentiments and designs. Neoptolemus and the Chorus have deceived the luckless Philoctetes; they recognise the depth of despair into which their deceit will plunge him; and now he meets with his terrible disaster before their very eyes. If this disaster cannot excite any marked degree of sympathy in them, it can at least induce them to look into their own conduct, to have consideration for so much misery and not wish to add to it still further by treachery. This is what the spectator looks for, and his expectations are not deceived by the noble-minded Neoptolemus. Philoctetes, had he been master of his pain, would have confirmed Neoptolemus in his dissimulation; Philoctetes, whose pain renders him incapable of all deception, how necessary soever the same may appear to him, lest his fellow-travellers repent too soon of their promise to take him with them; Philoctetes, who is himself perfectly natural, brings back Neoptolemus also to his nature. This conversion is splendid, and it is all the more touching, because it is brought about simply by humanity. With the Frenchman, on the other hand, the beautiful eyes have their share in it.¹ But I will dismiss

¹ Act II. Sc. iii., "*De mes déguisemens que penserait Sophie?*" says the son of Achilles.

this parody from my thoughts. This device of combining in the bystanders the pity intended to be evoked by hearing cries of pain, with some other emotion, has also been adopted by Sophocles in his *Trachiniæ*. The pain of Hercules is not merely an exhausting pain; it drives him to a state of frenzy, in which he only thirsts after vengeance. In his fury he has already seized Lichas and dashed him to pieces against the rock. The Chorus is composed of women, and it is therefore most natural that fear and horror should take possession of it. This, together with their suspense as to whether a god will yet hasten to the aid of Hercules or whether the latter will succumb to his misfortune, here forms the main point of interest, the feeling of sympathy thus being scarcely brought into play. As soon as the final issue has been decided by the assistance of the Oracles, Hercules becomes calm, and the admiration called forth by his last resolution takes the place of every other feeling. In comparing the suffering Hercules with the suffering Philoctetes, however, it must be borne in mind that the former is a demigod, whereas the latter is only a man. The man is never ashamed of his lamentations, but the demigod is ashamed that the mortal part of him should have so far mastered the immortal as to make him cry and moan like a girl.¹ We moderns do not believe in demigods, and yet the smallest hero among us is expected to feel and act like one.

Whether an actor could render his imitation of the shrieks and convulsions of pain absolutely illusive, I would not venture to say. If I found that our actors

¹ *Trach.*, l. 1088-89:

ὅστις ὥστε παρθένος
βέβρυχα κλαίων.

could not do it, I should first wish to know whether even a Garrick would find it impossible; and if he likewise failed to succeed, I should still be at liberty to think of the acting and declamation of the Ancients as having attained a perfection whereof we cannot to-day form the slightest conception.

CHAPTER V.

SOME antiquaries, while considering the Laocoon group to be the work of Greek sculptors, yet attribute it to the time of the Cæsars, believing, as they do, that Virgil's Laocoon served as a model for it. Of the ancient scholars who entertained this opinion, I will only mention Bartholomæus Marliani,¹ and, of the modern, Montfaucon.² They doubtless perceived such a striking resemblance between the work of art and the poet's description, that they deemed it impossible for them both to have lighted, by pure accident, on circumstances so identical as to have been most unlikely to occur to them independently of each other. To this they added the conjecture that, as far as invention and originality were concerned, the presumption was far stronger in favour of the poet than of the artist.

They appear, however, to have forgotten that a third supposition is possible. For the poet may perhaps have copied as little from the artist as the artist from the poet, and both may have drawn from a single and older source, which latter, according to Macrobius, might have been Pisander.³ For, at the time when the works of this Greek poet were still extant, it was a matter of common

¹ *Topographiæ Urbis Romæ*, lib. iv. cap. 14.

² *Suppl. aux Ant. Expliq.*, vol. i. p. 242.

³ *Saturnal.*, lib. v. cap. 2.

knowledge to schoolboys, *pueris decantatum*, that the Roman had imitated, or rather, faithfully translated from him, the entire conquest and destruction of Ilium, which forms the whole of his second Book. If, therefore, Pisander had also preceded Virgil in the story of Laocoon, the Greek artists had no need to seek the guidance of a Latin poet, and the conjecture as to the period in which they lived falls to the ground.

Now, if I were called upon to support the view held by Marliani and Montfaucon, I would suggest the following way out of the difficulty. Pisander's poems are lost, and it cannot be said with certainty how he treated the story of Laocoon. It is, however, probable that he gave the same version as that of which we still find traces in the Greek writers. But this nowise agrees with Virgil's narrative, and the Roman poet must therefore have entirely remodelled the Greek tradition to suit his own ideas. Laocoon's misfortune, as related by him, is of his own invention; consequently, if the artists, in their representation, are in harmony with him, it may reasonably be inferred that they must have lived after his time and taken his description for their model.

In Quintus Calaber we find, it is true, that Laocoon displays the same suspicion with regard to the wooden horse as he does in Virgil; but the wrath of Minerva, which he thereby incurs, is depicted in an entirely different manner. The ground trembles beneath the feet of the warning Trojan; fear and dismay seize him; a burning pain rages in his eyes; his brain is turned; he raves; he is stricken with blindness. It is only when, in his blindness, he still persists in urging the burning of the wooden horse, that Minerva sends two terrible serpents, which, however, attack Laocoon's children

only. In vain do the latter stretch out their hands towards their father; the poor, blind man is powerless to aid them. The serpents tear them to pieces and disappear beneath the earth. Laocoon himself remains untouched by them; and that this incident was not peculiar to Quintus,¹ but must have formed part of the current version, is attested by a passage in Lycophron, where these serpents² bear the epithet of "child devourers."

But if this incident was generally accepted by the Greeks, their artists would scarcely have ventured to depart from it; or, if they had, they would scarcely have done so in exactly the same manner as a Roman poet, unless they had known this poet and been expressly enjoined to copy him. This point, I think, must be insisted upon, if a defence of Marliani and Montfaucon is attempted. Virgil is the first and only author who lets both father and children be killed by the serpents; the sculptors likewise do this, although, as Greeks, it was hardly to be expected that they would do so: it is probable, therefore, that Virgil suggested it.

I feel full well how far this probability falls short of historical certainty. But though I do not intend to draw any further historical conclusions therefrom, I think it is at least admissible as a hypothesis, to guide the critic in making his observations. Whether it is proved, or not, that the sculptors followed Virgil, I will assume it to be so, in order to see how, in that case, they would have imitated him. I have already dealt with the subject of

¹ *Paralip.*, lib. xii. 383.

² Or rather "serpent," for Lycophron seems to be speaking of one only—

καὶ παιδοβρῶτος πορκέως νήσοις διπλάσι

the shriek. Perhaps a further comparison may lead to observations no less instructive.

The idea of connecting the father and his two sons in one knot, by means of the murderous serpents, is undeniably a happy one and betokens a high æsthetic imagination. Whose idea was it? That of the poet or that of the artist? Montfaucon denies its origin to the poet.¹ But I fancy he cannot have read him with sufficient attention.

“ Illi agmine certo
Laocoonta petunt, et primum parva duorum
Corpora natorum serpens amplexus uterque
Implicat et miseros morsu depascitur artus.
Post ipsum, auxilio subeuntem et tela ferentem
Corripiunt, spirisque ligant ingentibus.”

The poet has described the serpents as being of wonderful length. They have coiled themselves round the sons, and, upon the father coming to their aid, they seize upon him also (*corripiunt*). Owing to their size, they could not have uncoiled themselves from the sons all at once, and they must, therefore, at one moment have been already attacking the father with their heads and fore-parts, whilst still holding the sons in the folds of their tails. This moment is necessary for the continuity of the poetical picture: the poet allows us to grasp it fully; but this was not the time for describing it in detail. That the old commentators also felt this, appears to be proved by a passage in Donatus.² How much less probable, then, that this should have escaped the notice of artists, whose discerning eye is so quickly and clearly impressed with anything that they can turn to advantage.

¹ *Suppl. aux Antiq. Expl.*, vol. i. p. 243.

² Donatus, *ad. v. 227* ; lib. ii. *Æneid.*

In describing the serpents as winding themselves round Laocoon, also, the poet is very careful to avoid mentioning the arms, so that the hands may have free play.

“Ille simul manibus tendit divellere nodos.”

In this respect the artists were bound to follow him. Nothing adds so much expression and life to a figure as the movement of the hands; in the case of the passions, especially, the most speaking face makes but a meaningless impression without it. With the arms pressed close to the bodies by the coils of the serpents, a death-like torpor would have been cast over the entire group. As it is, both in the case of the principal figure and in that of the others, we see the arms in full play, and their activity is greatest where the pain is most violent.

This freedom of the arms, as far as the intertwining of the serpents is concerned, is the only point which the artists could with advantage borrow from the poet. Virgil makes the serpents wind themselves twice round Laocoon's body and twice round his neck, with their heads towering high above him.

“Bis medium amplexi, bis collo squamea circum
Terga dati, superant capite et cervicibus altis.”

This picture fills our imagination excellently. The noblest parts of the body are crushed almost to suffocation, and the poison is directed straight towards the face. It was, notwithstanding, no picture for the artists, whose object lay in depicting the effects of the poison and of the pain upon the body. Now, in order that these might appear, they had to leave the chief parts of the body as free as possible, without even the slightest trace of any external pressure which might divert or weaken the

play of the suffering nerves and straining muscles. The double coils of the serpent would have covered the whole body; that agonised contraction of the abdomen, which is so effective, would have remained hidden; and those portions of the body, which could have been revealed above, beneath, or between the coils, would have disclosed compressions and distensions, brought about, not by internal pain, but by external pressure. Again, the double coil round the neck would have entirely destroyed that pyramidal acumination which makes the group so pleasing to the eye; and the pointed heads of the serpents, protruding from the mass, would have produced such a contrast by their disproportion as to render the form of the whole singularly displeasing. Some designers have, in spite of this, been so injudicious as to adhere to the poet. The ugly effect resulting from this may be seen in a drawing by Franz Cleyn,¹ amongst others. The ancient sculptors saw at a glance that in a case of this sort their art demanded an entirely different treatment. They transferred all the coils from the neck and body to the thighs and feet; these parts they could conceal and compress as much as was necessary without spoiling the effect, and by so doing they moreover suggested the idea of impeded flight and of a kind of immobility, which greatly favours the artificial prolongation of a single attitude.

I am at a loss to understand why the critics should have passed over in silence this obvious difference, in the coiling of the serpents, between the work of the artists and the description of the poet. This point of difference betokens the artists' wisdom just as much as

¹ In the splendid large folio edition of Dryden's *Virgil* (London, 1697).

does another, which the critics have all noticed, but which they seek to defend rather than venture to approve. I mean the difference in respect of drapery. Virgil's Laocoon is arrayed in his priestly vestments, whereas in the group he and his two sons appear entirely naked. Some persons, it is said, find it very incongruous that a king's son and a priest should be thus represented at a sacrifice. And art critics answer them by maintaining in all seriousness that it certainly is an error against conventionality, but that the artists were compelled to it, because they could not give their figures the proper attire. Sculpture, they say, cannot imitate any stuffs; thick folds produce a bad effect, and therefore it was better for the artists to choose the lesser of two evils, and to offend against truth itself rather than give an inartistic representation of the drapery. If the ancients would have smiled at the objection I do not know what they would have said to the reply. Art could not be debased more than it has been here. For, supposing that the various textures could be imitated in sculpture equally as well as in painting: would Laocoon, in that case, of necessity have to be represented draped? Would nothing be lost by his being draped? Does a garment, wrought by a slavish hand, possess as much beauty as an organic body, the work of eternal Wisdom? Does the imitation of the one demand the same skill, betoken the same merit, or deserve the same honour, as the imitation of the other? Do our eyes merely wish to be deceived, and is it all the same to them wherewith they are deceived?

With the poet a garment is a garment; it conceals nothing; our imagination sees everything beneath it. Whether Virgil's Laocoon is clothed or not, his pain

displays itself equally in either case to the imagination in every part of his body. His brow is covered with the priestly fillet, but is not on that account concealed from us. On the contrary, this fillet not only does not hinder, but it even strengthens the idea, which we form in our minds, of the misfortune of the sufferer.

“Perfusus sanie vittas atroque veneno.”

His priestly dignity is of no avail to him; even its emblem, which everywhere wins him reverence and respect, is permeated and polluted by the poisonous juice of the serpent.

The artist had, however, to abandon this accessory idea, if the main subject was not to suffer. Had he left Laocoon only this fillet, he would to a large extent have weakened the expression; for the brow, which is the seat of expression, would have been partially hidden. Just as, therefore, in the case of the shriek he sacrificed expression to beauty, so here he sacrificed conventionality to expression. In any case conventionality was a matter of little value to the ancients. They felt that the highest aim of their art led to a total disregard of it. This highest aim is beauty. Clothes are the outcome of necessity, and what has art to do with necessity? I admit that there is also a certain beauty in drapery, but what is this as compared to the beauty of the human form? And will he who can attain to the greater be satisfied with the less? I much fear that the most perfect master of drapery shows, by that very talent, wherein his weakness lies.

CHAPTER VI.

My hypothesis that the artists imitated the poet nowise detracts from the merit of the former. On the contrary, this very fact throws the most favourable light upon their wisdom. They followed the poet, but without allowing him to mislead them even in the smallest details. They were, indeed, supplied with their design, but, as they had to transfer this design from one art to another, they found ample opportunity for original thought. And these their own ideas, manifested in those points wherein they differ from their model, prove that they were equally as great in their own art as he was in his.

Let us now reverse the hypothesis and assume that the poet imitated the artists. Several scholars have maintained this supposition to be the true one.¹ I am not aware that they have produced any historical support in its favour. But the work of art appeared to them to be of such extraordinary beauty that they could not persuade themselves to believe that it was of so late a date. According to them, it must have belonged to the

¹ Maffei, Richardson, and more recently Herr von Hagedorn. (*Observations on Painting*, p. 37. Richardson, *Traité de la Peinture*, vol. iii. p. 513.) De Fontaines need hardly be included here. In the notes to his translation of Virgil he, it is true, likewise maintains that the poet had the group in his mind; but he is ignorant enough to assert it to be the work of Phidias.

time when art flourished at its best, since that age alone seemed worthy of it.

It has been proved that, excellent as is the description which Virgil gives us, the artists, nevertheless, could not make use of several of its features. This conclusion limits the general principle, that a good poetical description will necessarily make a good material painting, and that a poet's description is a good one only in so far as the artist can follow it in all its details. This limitation might be assumed, even before it is corroborated by examples, if we take into consideration the wider sphere of poetry, the boundless field of our imagination, the spirituality of its images, which can be ranged beside each other in the greatest profuseness and variety, without covering or marring one another, as might be the case with the things themselves, or their natural symbols, within the narrow limits of space and time.

But if the less cannot contain the greater, the less can be comprised in the greater. That is to say: although each trait, which the descriptive poet employs, may not produce as good an effect upon a flat surface or in marble, yet could not perhaps every detail introduced by the artist be equally effective in the work of the poet? Undeniably so; for what we find beautiful in a work of art is beautiful not to the eye, but to the imagination by means of the eye. So that the same picture may be revived in our imagination by either arbitrary or natural symbols, and it must in every case give rise to the same pleasure, though not in the same degree.

Whilst admitting this, however, I must confess that the supposition that Virgil imitated the artists appears to me far less reasonable than its converse. If the artists followed the poet, all their deviations from him can

be satisfactorily accounted for. They had to deviate, because the details in question, as given by the poet, would, in their work, have presented difficulties which in his case did not exist. But what could have led the poet to deviate from the artists? If he had copied the group faithfully in each and every particular, would he not still have furnished us with an excellent picture? I can understand how his imagination, following its own bent, may have suggested this or that feature to him; but what reasons can have prompted his judgment to change beautiful features, which he had before his very eyes, for others, I am at a loss to understand.

I am of opinion, too, that, had Virgil taken the group for his model, he would hardly have been content with leaving to mere conjecture, as it were, the entanglement of all the three bodies in a single knot. It would have struck his eye too vividly, and he would have experienced too excellent an effect therefrom, not to have given it greater prominence in his description. I have said that this was not the time for depicting the entanglement in detail; but the addition of a single word might perhaps have distinctly expressed it, without removing it from that background in which the poet had to leave it. What the artist could express without this word, the poet, had he seen it in the work of the artist, would not have left undescribed.

The artist had the weightiest reasons for not allowing Laocoon's pain to vent itself in shrieks. But if the poet had before him, in the work of art, this affecting combination of pain and beauty, what absolute necessity was there for him to omit altogether any indication of the manly dignity and high-souled patience suggested by this combination of pain and beauty, and to suddenly

affright us with the horrible shrieks of his Laocoon? Richardson says that Virgil's Laocoon must shriek, because the poet wishes to excite, not so much compassion for him as horror and alarm among the Trojans. I grant this, though Richardson does not appear to have borne in mind that the poet gives the description, not in his own person, but as coming from Æneas in the presence of Dido, whose sympathy he could not move too strongly. Only, what surprises me is not the shrieking, but the total lack of gradation in introducing it, which the work of art ought naturally to have suggested to the poet, had the latter, as we are assuming, taken the same for his model. Richardson adds¹:—"The story of Laocoon is only intended to lead up to the pathetic description of the final destruction of the city, and the poet, therefore, could not have ventured to heighten the interest, lest, by this means, the misfortune of a single citizen might engross our attention, which should be wholly reserved for this last fearful night." This, however, is attempting to look at the thing from the point of view of the painter, which cannot be done. With the poet, Laocoon's misfortune and the destruction of the city are not two pictures side by side; they together constitute one entire picture, which our eyes could, or should, be able to take in at a glance; and in this case only would our minds be allowed to dwell upon Laocoon rather than upon the burning town. The one description follows upon the other, and I cannot see what disadvantage could accrue to the second, however much the preceding one might have moved us, unless it be that the second is in itself not sufficiently pathetic.

Still less reason could the poet have had for altering

¹ *De la Peinture*, vol. iii. p. 516.

the coils of the serpents. In the work of art these occupy the hands and bind the feet. The pleasure which this arrangement gives to the eye is equalled by the vividness of the picture which the imagination retains of it. It is so clear and distinct that words express it scarcely less powerfully than the material representation of it.

“Micat alter, et ipsum
Laocoonta petit, totumque infraque supraque
Implicat et rabido tandem ferit ilia morsu.

At serpens lapsu crebro redeunte subintrat
Lubricus, intortoque ligat genua infima nodo.”

These lines are by Sadoletto. They would without doubt have been rendered more graphically by Virgil, had a visible model fired his imagination, and would certainly have been better than those which he has given us in their stead :

“Bis medium amplexi, bis collo squamea circum
Terga dati, superant capite et cervicibus altis.”

These traits, it is true, fill our imagination, but the latter must not ponder over them, it must not seek to realise them distinctly. It must see at one time only the serpents, at another, only Laocoon. It must not try to conceive the group which the two would form together ; for as soon as it tries to do this, it becomes displeased with Virgil's picture and finds it exceedingly inartistic.

But even if the alterations introduced by Virgil into the borrowed model were not unhappy, they would at least have been purely arbitrary. An imitation is intended to resemble the object imitated : but will it be an imitation if more is altered than is necessary ? Nay, rather, if this be done, it is evident that to produce

an imitation was not the object aimed at, and that consequently the work has not been imitated.

Not the whole, it may be urged, but perhaps this or that part. Very well; but which are these single parts, that agree so exactly in the description and the work of art, that the poet might appear to have taken them from the latter? The father, the sons, and the serpents were all transmitted by legend to the poet as well as to the artist. Apart from traditional details, they agree in nothing except that they both interlace the father and sons in a single knot of serpents. But this they were prompted to do by the altered circumstance that the very same calamity which seized the sons overtook the father also. Now, this alteration, as above mentioned, appears to have been made by Virgil; for the Greek tradition gives an entirely different account. Consequently, if there has been imitation on the one side or the other, as might appear to be the case, in view of this interlacing being common to both, it will probably have been on the side of the artist rather than on that of the poet. In every other respect they differ; only with this distinction, that, if it is the artist that has made these variations, his intention of imitating the poet can still hold good, inasmuch as the end and limits of his art compelled him to make them: if, on the other hand, the poet is assumed to have imitated the artist, then all the variations alluded to are proof against this pretended imitation, and whoever supports it, in spite of them, can only mean that he considers the work of art to be of an earlier date than the description of the poet.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN it is said that the artist imitates the poet, or the poet the artist, one of two meanings may be conveyed. Either the one takes the work of the other as the real object to be imitated, or they both imitate the same object, the one borrowing the mode and manner of imitation from the other.

Virgil, in describing the shield of *Æneas*, imitates the artist, who made this shield, in the former sense of the term. The work of art itself, not what is represented upon it, forms the object of his imitation; and if he describes also what is represented upon it, he describes it merely as a part of the shield, and not as the thing itself. If, on the other hand, Virgil had imitated the *Laocoon* group, this would have formed an imitation in the second sense of the term. For he would not have imitated the group itself, but that which it represents, borrowing from it the features only of his imitation.

In the first-named imitation the poet is original; in the second, he is a plagiarist. The former belongs to that universal imitation which constitutes the essence of his art, and he works as a genius, whether his subject be taken from another art or from Nature herself. The second, on the contrary, entirely degrades him; instead of the things themselves, he imitates imitations of them,

and gives us cold reminiscences of the trials of another man's genius for original ones of his own.

Now, if poet and artist are not infrequently led to look from the same point of view at those objects which are common to both, their imitations cannot fail in many cases to coincide, without the slightest copying or rivalry between the two having taken place. These points of coincidence between contemporary artists and poets, whose works are no longer extant, may serve to elucidate their attitude towards each other; but to seek to support such elucidations by contending that such a coincidence was the result of design, and furthermore, that every detail points to the idea that the poet had this or that statue or painting in his mind, is to render him a very equivocal service. And not him alone, but the reader also, to whom a very clear, if you will, but at the same time decidedly cold explanation of the finest passages is thereby conveyed.

This is at once the aim and the fault of a celebrated English work. Spence wrote his *Polymetis*¹ in a manner which revealed great classical erudition and a very intimate acquaintance with the extant works of ancient art. He has often succeeded in his attempts to illustrate the Roman poets by means of these works, and to draw from the former, in return, evidence in favour of ancient and hitherto unexplained works of art. But, in spite of this, I maintain that his book must be quite intolerable to every reader of taste.

¹ The first edition bears the date 1747, the second, 1755, and is entitled: "Polymetis, or an Enquiry concerning the Agreement between the Works of the Roman Poets, and the Remains of the ancient Artists, being an Attempt to illustrate them mutually from one another. In ten books, by the Rev. Mr. Spence." London, printed for Dodsley, fol.

When Valerius Flaccus describes the winged lightning upon the Roman shields,

(“Nec primus radios, miles Romane, corusci
Fulminis et rutilas scutis diffuderis alas,”)

his description naturally becomes much clearer to me, if I see a representation of such a shield upon an old monument.¹ Possibly also Mars was represented, by the ancient armourers, on their helmets and shields, in the same hovering attitude above Rhea, in which Addison believed that he saw him on a coin; and Juvenal may have been thinking of such a helmet or shield, when he made an allusion by a word, which had perplexed all the commentators up to the time of Addison.² I myself am of opinion that the passage in Ovid, where the wearied Cephalus calls to the cooling breezes:

“Aura venias
Meque juves, intresque sinus, gratissima, nostros!”

and his Procris takes this “Aura” to be the name of a rival—that this passage, I say, seems more natural, when I see by the works of art of the ancients that they actually personified the gentle breezes and worshipped a kind of female sylphs under the name of “Auræ.”³ I admit that, when Juvenal likens a fashionable idler to a statue of Hermes, one would have difficulty in discovering the point of resemblance, unless one had seen such a statue and knew it to be a worthless column, which only bears the head, or at most the trunk of the god, and, as it exhibits neither hands nor feet, suggests the

¹ Val. Flaccus, lib. vi., l. 55, 56. Polymetis, *Dial.* vi. p. 50.

² *Sat.* xi. l. 100-107.

³ Polymetis, *Dial.* xiii. p. 208.

idea of inactivity.¹ Illustrations of this kind are not to be despised, even though they be not always necessary or always sufficient. To the poet the work of art appeared as a thing existing in itself, and not as an imitation; or else both artist and poet had adopted the same conceptions, in consequence of which a certain resemblance in their works was of course inevitable, from which, in turn, conclusions as to the universality of those conceptions might be deduced.

But when Tibullus paints the figure of Apollo, as he appeared to him in a dream—the most beautiful of youths; his temples encircled by the chaste bay; his golden locks, which fall about his slender neck, redolent with Syrian perfumes; his whole body gleaming with mingled hues of white and red, like the tender cheeks of a bride, who is just being led to her beloved;—why should these features be borrowed from famous ancient paintings? Echion's "*nova nupta verecundia notabilis*" may have been in Rome, and may have been copied thousands of times; but are we therefore to assume that bridal modesty itself had disappeared from the world? After the painter had once beheld it, was it no longer to be seen by any poet, save in the painter's imitation?² Or again, when another poet describes Vulcan as being wearied and applies the epithets "red" and "burning" to his face heated by the forge: had he first to learn from the work of a painter that toil wearies and heat reddens?³ Or when Lucretius, in describing the seasons, makes them pass before us in natural succession, together with the train of their effects in earth and air:

¹ *Sat.* viii. l. 52-55.

² Tibullus, *Eleg.* 4, lib. iii. Polymetis, *Dial.* viii. p. 84.

³ Statius, lib. i., *Sylv.* 5. l. 8. Polymetis, *Dial.* viii. p. 81.

was Lucretius an ephemeron, had he never lived through a whole year to be able to experience all these changes himself, instead of describing them from a procession in which their statues were carried about? Was it from these statues that he first learnt the old poetic device of transforming such abstractions into realities?¹ Or Virgil's "*Pontem indignatus Araxes*," that excellent poetical picture of a river overflowing its banks, as it tears away the bridge beneath which it flows—does it not lose all its beauty, if we assume that the poet there alludes to a work of art, in which the river-god is represented in the act of destroying a bridge?² Of what use are such illustrations as these, which, in the clearest passages, deprive the poet of his share of honour and allow the ideas of some artist to glimmer forth instead?

I regret that so useful a book as the *Polymetis* might otherwise be, has, through this tasteless caprice for charging the ancient poets with availing themselves of the genius of others rather than their own, been rendered repulsive and far more prejudicial to the classical writers than the watery commentaries of the most insipid of etymologists could ever be. Still more do I regret that in this respect even Addison should have preceded Spence, and, in his praiseworthy desire to employ his acquaintance with ancient works of art as a means of interpretation, equally failed to distinguish where it is becoming for the poet to imitate the artist and where it is derogatory for him to do so.³

¹ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, lib. v., l. 736-747.

² *Æneid*, viii. 728. *Polymetis*, *Dial.* xiv. 230.

³ In various passages of his travels, and in his conversation on ancient coins.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF the resemblance which exists between Poetry and Painting Spence holds the most extraordinary ideas. He thinks that, with the Ancients, the two arts were so closely connected that they always went, as it were, hand in hand, and that the poet never lost sight of the painter, nor the painter of the poet. That Poetry is, of the two, the more comprehensive art; that it has at its command beauties to which Painting cannot attain; that it may often have reasons for preferring beauties which are not adapted for painting, to such as are; all this appears never to have occurred to him, and the slightest differences, therefore, which he observes between the ancient poets and artists embarrass him and cause him to advance the most extraordinary explanations.

The majority of ancient poets endow Bacchus with horns. It is therefore strange, says Spence, that these horns so rarely appear on his statues.¹ He offers first one reason, and then another, now the ignorance of antiquaries, now the smallness of the horns themselves, which may have been concealed beneath the grape-clusters and ivy leaves, that invariably formed the head-dress of the god. He keeps hovering around the true reason without suspecting it. The horns of Bacchus were not natural horns, as were those of the Fauns and

¹ Polymetis, *Dial.* ix p. 129.

Satyrs. They were an ornament for the brow, and he could put them on and lay them aside at will.

“ Tibi, cum sine cornibus adstas
Virgineum caput est,”

says Ovid in his festal invocation of Bacchus.¹ The latter, therefore, could also show himself without horns, and he did so whenever he desired to appear in his girlish beauty. This is how the artists also wished to depict him, and they accordingly had to avoid every addition which might produce a bad effect. An addition of this kind would be the horns, which were fastened to the chaplet, as shown on a head in the Royal Cabinet of Berlin.² Such also was the chaplet itself, which concealed his beautiful forehead, and is therefore as rarely to be met with in the statues of Bacchus as the horns themselves, though the poets as often represent him with it, as 'its inventor: The poet could, by means of the horns and the chaplet, make effective allusions to the actions and character of the god; the artist, on the contrary, was thereby prevented from displaying higher beauties; and if, as I opine, Bacchus received the epithet *Biformis*, *Δίμορφος*, for this very reason, that he could appear beautiful as well as hideous, it was only natural that the artists should prefer to depict him in whichever form best satisfied the demands of their art.

With the Roman poets, Minerva and Juno often hurl the lightning. But why is this not the case in the representations of them? asks Spence.³ He replies: “This power was the special privilege of these two goddesses,

¹ *Metamorph.*, lib. iv., l. 19, 20.

² *Begeri Thes. Brandenb.*, vol. iii. p. 242.

³ *Polymetis, Dial.* vi. p. 63.

the reason of which was, perhaps, first learned in the Samothracian mysteries. But since among the ancient Romans the artists were considered as common people, and would therefore be rarely initiated into them, they would doubtless know nothing of it, and what they knew not of they clearly could not represent." Now, I should like to ask Spence: Did these common people work for their own account, or at the bidding of others, their superiors in rank, who might very easily be acquainted with these mysteries? Did the artists occupy the same inferior position among the Greeks also? Were not the Roman artists for the most part Greeks by birth? and so forth.

Statius and Valerius Flaccus describe an exasperated Venus, and give her such terrible features that she at that moment resembles a Fury rather than a goddess of Love. Spence searches the ancient works of art in vain for such a Venus. What conclusion does he arrive at? That greater latitude is conceded to the poet than to the sculptor and painter? This is the conclusion which he should have formed; but, having decided, once for all, that scarce anything can be good in a poetical description, which would appear absurd, if represented in a statue or picture,¹ he infers that the poets must have committed an error. "Statius and Valerius belong to an age when Roman poetry was already in its decline. In this very passage they display their bad judgment and corrupted taste. Among the poets of a better age such a repudiation of the laws of artistic expression will never be found."²

These words indeed betray very little power of dis-

¹ Polymetis, *Dial.* xx. p. 311.

² *Ibid.*, *Dial.* vii. p. 74.

crimination. I will not, however, in this instance, defend either Statius or Valerius, but merely make a general observation. The gods and spiritual beings, as represented by the artist, are not precisely the same as required by the poet. With the artist, they are personified abstractions, which must always retain their appropriate characteristics, if they are to be recognised. With the poet, on the other hand, they are real, acting beings, possessing, besides their general character, other qualities and feelings, which may, according to circumstances, predominate over the former. To the sculptor, Venus is "Love," and nothing more. He must therefore endow her with all the modest, retiring beauty and graceful charms, which delight us in the objects of our love, and which we consequently associate with the abstract idea of love. The slightest deviation from this ideal prevents our due appreciation of the picture. Beauty, endowed with more of majesty than of modesty, is no longer a Venus, but a Juno. Charms, imperious and manly, rather than graceful, give us a Minerva instead of a Venus. Moreover, an exasperated Venus, a Venus fired with revenge and fury, is, to the sculptor, an absolute contradiction; for love, as such, is never angered or vindictive. To the poet, on the other hand, Venus is not only "Love," but also the goddess of Love, who, in addition to this character, possesses her own individuality, and must, in consequence, be as capable of the impulses of aversion as she is of those of affection. What wonder, then, if he represents her as burning with anger and fury, especially when it is inspired love itself that causes her to be so?

It is, of course, true that in a group the artist can also, as well as the poet, introduce Venus, or any other

divinity, as a real and acting being, apart from her peculiar character. But, in that case, their actions must at any rate not contradict their character, even though they may not of necessity spring therefrom. Venus delivers over the divine armour to her son; this act can be represented by the artist, as well as by the poet. Here nothing hinders him from giving to his Venus all the grace and beauty, which are her attributes as the goddess of Love; in fact, she will thus become all the more recognisable. But when Venus seeks to take vengeance on her contemners, the men of Lemnos, and, huge in form and wild in mien, with flushed cheeks and dishevelled hair, seizes the torch and, throwing a sable robe around her, stormily descends upon a dark cloud: this is no moment for the artist, because there is no feature whereby he can render her recognisable at this moment. It is a moment suited to the poet only; because he is allowed to combine another, in which the goddess is wholly Venus, so closely and so exactly with it, that even in seeing the Fury we do not lose sight of the goddess of Love. This Flaccus does:—

“ Neque enim alma videri
Jam tumet; aut tereti crinem subnectitur auro,
Sidereos diffusa sinus. Eadem effera et ingens
Et maculis suffecta genas; pinumque sonantem
Virginibus stygiis, nigramque simillima pallam.”¹

Statius does the same:—

“ Illa Paphon veterem centumque altaria linquens,
Nec vultu nec crine prior, solvisse jugalem
Ceston, et Idalias procul ablegasse volucres
Fertur. Erante certe, media qui noctis in umbra
Divam, alios ignes majoraque tela gerentem,

¹ *Argonautæ*, lib. ii. 102-106.

Tartarias inter thalamis volitasse sorores
Vulgarent : utque implicitis arcana domorum
Anguibus, et saeva formidine cuncta replevit
Limina." ¹

Or it may be said: the poet alone possesses the power of describing by means of negative traits, and of uniting two appearances in one, by mixing these negative traits with positive ones. No longer is it the graceful Venus; no longer is her hair bound with golden clasps; no azure robe is thrown around her; she appears without her girdle, and is armed with other flames and larger arrows, in company with furies like herself. Now, because the artist cannot avail himself of this scene, is the poet also on that account to forego it? If Painting is to be the sister of Poetry, let her at least not be a jealous sister, and let not the younger deny to the elder every ornament which she herself cannot wear to advantage.

¹ *Thebaid*, lib. v. 61-64.

CHAPTER IX.

IN comparing the painter and the poet with each other in individual cases, special care must be taken to see whether they have both been allowed full freedom; whether, unhampered by any external influence, they have been able to reach the highest effects of which their respective arts are capable.

For the ancient artist, religion often constituted such an external hindrance. Being destined for worship and reverence, his work could not always be as perfect as if the pleasure of the beholder had formed his sole aim. Superstition clothed the gods in allegorical forms, and the most beautiful of them were not always honoured as such.

Bacchus, in the temple of Lemnos, from which the pious Hypsipyle rescued her father in the form of the god,¹ was represented with horns. He was, no doubt, also represented thus in all his temples, for the horns were a symbol to denote his being. But the free artist, who did not design his Bacchus for any temple, left out this symbol; and if, among the still extant statues of that god, we find none with horns, it is perhaps a proof that they do not belong to the consecrated images in which he was actually worshipped. It is, moreover, highly

¹ Valerius Flaccus, *Argonaut*, lib. ii. 265-273.

probable that on these latter was fully vented the fury of the pious iconoclasts, during the earliest centuries of Christianity, who only here and there spared a work, if undefiled by adoration.

As, however, among the excavated antiques there have been found examples of the one kind, as well as of the other, I should wish the title of works of art to be applied only to those in which the artist has really been enabled to show himself as such; in which beauty formed his first and final aim. All others, which bear too clearly the traces of religious conformity, do not deserve this name; because their art was not pursued for its own sake, but was a mere helpmate of religion, which looked to the significant rather than to the beautiful, in the material subjects offered by it for representation; though I do not mean to say that religion did not often also embody the significant in the beautiful, or, in consideration for art and the finer taste of the age, forego so much of the former that the latter alone might seem to prevail.

Unless some such distinction is made, the connoisseur and the antiquary will continually be at loggerheads, owing to their not understanding each other. If the former, from his insight into the aims of art, declares that the ancient artist could not have made this or that work, that is to say, of his own free will, as an artist, then the latter will stretch his meaning and take him to imply that neither religion nor any other cause lying outside the domain of art could have prompted its execution by the artist, that is to say, by the artist as a craftsman. He will therefore believe himself able to refute the connoisseur with the first statue that comes to hand, which the latter, to the great scandal of the

learned world, does not scruple to consign again to the rubbish-heap, from which it was taken.

On the other hand, the influence of religion upon art may easily be exaggerated. Of this, a curious example is afforded by Spence. Having found in Ovid that Vesta was not worshipped in her temple under any personal image, he thought himself justified in concluding that there were no statues whatever of this goddess, and that any which might hitherto have been taken for such must have been intended to represent not Vesta, but a vestal. A strange conclusion! Because the goddess was, in one temple, worshipped only under the symbol of fire, was the artist on this account deprived of the right to personify, in his own manner, a being whom the poets endow with a distinct personality, whom they represent as the daughter of Saturn and Ops, and depict as being in danger of falling under the brutality of Priapus, and so forth? Here Spence also makes this mistake, viz., that he applies what Ovid says of one particular temple, *i.e.*, the one at Rome,¹ to all the temples of this goddess without distinction, and to her worship in general. But the worship of Vesta in this temple at Rome was different from that in other places, different even from that which prevailed in Italy before Numa built the temple in question. The latter would hear of no representation of any deity in human or animal form; and the improvement which he effected in the worship of Vesta, consisted, no doubt, in his forbidding all personal representations of her. We learn from Ovid himself that, before the time of Numa, there were statues of Vesta in her temple, which, from shame, when their priestess Sylvia became a mother, covered

¹ *Fasti*, lib. vi. 295-298.

their eyes with their maiden hands.¹ That even in the temples which the goddess possessed outside of Rome, in the Roman provinces, her worship was not quite the same as that enjoined by Numa, appears to be proved by various ancient inscriptions, in which mention is made of a *Pontifex vestae*.² At Corinth, too, there was a temple of Vesta, devoid of statues, and with but a simple altar, upon which sacrifices were offered to the goddess.³ But does this prove that the Greeks possessed no statues of Vesta? There was one at Athens, in the Prytaneion beside the statue of Peace.⁴ The people of Iasus boasted of one, upon which, although it stood in the open air, neither snow nor rain ever fell.⁵ Pliny, again, mentions a reclining statue, the work of Scopas, which at that time was in the Servilian gardens at Rome.⁶ Granting that we can to-day with difficulty distinguish a mere Vestal from a Vesta herself, does this prove that the ancients were equally unable to distinguish the one from the other, or perhaps even wished to make no distinction between them? Certain features point plainly to the one rather than to the other. The sceptre, the torch, the palladium, we only assign to the hand of the goddess. The cymbal, which Codinus attributes to her, may perhaps belong to her merely as goddess of the Earth; or it may be that Codinus himself did not really know what it was that he saw.⁷

¹ *Fasti*, lib. iii. 45, 46.

² *Lipsius de Vesta et Vestalibus*, cap. 13.

³ Pausanias, *Corinth*, cap. xxxv., sect. 1.

⁴ *Idem*, *Attic.*, cap. xviii., sect. 3.

⁵ Polybius, *Hist.*, lib. xvi. 11.

⁶ Plinius, xxxvi. 4.

⁷ *Georg. Codinus de Originib. Constant.*, Edit. Venet., p. 12.

CHAPTER X.

I MUST call attention to an expression of surprise in Spence, which clearly shows how slight must have been his reflections upon the limits of Poetry and Painting.

“As to the muses in general,” he says, “it is remarkable that the poets say so little of them in a descriptive way; much less indeed than might be expected for deities to whom they are so particularly indebted.”¹

In other words, he is surprised that the poets, in speaking of them, should not adopt the dumb speech of the painter. With the poets, Urania is the muse of Astronomy; her name and actions reveal her office. Now the artist, in order to reveal this, must depict her pointing with a wand to a celestial globe; this wand, this celestial globe, and this posture are the signs whereby he enables us to conclude that it is Urania. But when the poet wishes to tell us that Urania has long ago foreseen his death in the stars—

“Ipsa diu positis lethum prædixerat astris
Uranie,”²

why should he, out of consideration for the painter, add, “Urania, with the wand in her hand and the celestial globe before her”? Is it not as though a person, who could, and might speak aloud, should at the same time

¹ Polymetis, *Dial.* viii., p 91.

² Statius, *Theb.* viii. 551.

also employ those signs which the mutes, in the Turk's seraglio, have, from lack of speech, invented among themselves?

The same surprise is again manifested by Spence at the moral beings, or those deities to whose care the Ancients allotted the virtues and the conduct of human life.¹ "It is observable," he says, "that the Roman poets say less of the best of these moral beings than might be expected. The artists are much fuller on this head; and one who would settle what appearances each of them made should go to the medals of the Roman Emperors.² The poets, in fact, speak of them very often as persons; but of their attributes, their dress and the rest of their figure they generally say but little."

When the poet personifies abstractions, he characterises them sufficiently by their names and the actions which he assigns to them.

To the artist these means are wanting, and he must therefore endow his personified abstractions with certain symbols, whereby they may be recognised. These symbols, since they consist in, and signify, something different, constitute them allegorical figures.

A female figure holding a bridle in her hand, another leaning against a pillar, are, in art, allegorical beings. But Temperance and Constancy are, to the poet, not allegorical beings, but merely personified abstractions.

The artist is driven by necessity to employ symbols in depicting these beings, for in no other way can he show clearly what this or that figure is intended to represent. But why should the poet, who knows of no such necessity,

¹ Polymetis, *Dial.* x., p. 137.

² *Ibid.*, *Dial.* x., p. 134.

employ those symbols which the same forces upon the artist?

What so much surprises Spence ought to be laid down as a general law for poets. They must not consider the necessities of painting as a part of their own wealth. They must not look upon the means which art has adopted in order to imitate poetry as perfections of which they might have cause to be envious. The artist, in bedecking an image with symbols, exalts a mere figure to a higher being. But were the poet to employ these artistic decorations, he would degrade a higher being into a puppet.

Confirmed as this rule is by the practice of the Ancients, its intentional violation is a favourite fault of modern poets. They deck all their imaginary beings in masks, and those who best understand these masquerades generally know the least of the principal work; that is to say, how to make their beings act, and, by their actions, to indicate their characters.

There is, however, among the attributes with which the artists characterise their abstractions, one class which lends itself more easily and worthily to poetic treatment. I mean those which are in reality nowise allegorical, but are to be considered rather as instruments which would, or could, be made use of by the beings possessing them, were the latter to act as real persons. The bridle in the hand of Temperance, the pillar against which Constancy is leaning, are absolutely allegorical, and are consequently of no use to the poet. The balance in the hand of Justice is somewhat less so, because the right use of the balance really constitutes a part of justice. But the lyre or flute in the hand of a muse, the spear in the hand of

Mars, the hammer and tongs in the hands of Vulcan, are in no way symbolical, but are merely instruments, without which these beings could not produce the results which we ascribe to them. To this class belong also those attributes which the ancient poets interweave with their descriptions, and which, in contradistinction to the allegorical ones referred to, I should therefore prefer to call the poetical attributes. These signify the thing itself, whereas the former merely denote something which resembles it.

CHAPTER XI.

COUNT CAYLUS also appears to think that the poet should bedeck his imaginary beings with allegorical attributes.¹ The Count certainly understood painting better than he did poetry.

Yet, in the work in which he expresses this desire, I have found occasion for weightier reflections, and I now proceed to offer the most important of these for more careful consideration.

The Count is of opinion that the artist should make himself more closely acquainted with the greatest descriptive poet, Homer—that second nature; for from him he would learn what store of rich and hitherto unused material for pictures of the highest excellence is offered by the story treated by the Greek; and that the more closely he copied the poet in the minutest details given by the latter, the more successful his execution would be.

In this suggestion there is a confusion of the two kinds of imitation, which I have distinguished above. The painter must, according to the Count, not only imitate that which the poet has imitated, but he must also adopt

¹ “Tableaux tirés de l’Iliade, de l’Odyssée d’Homère et de l’Enéide de Virgile, avec des observations générales sur le Costume; a Paris, 1757-58.”

the same details in doing so ; that is to say, he must not use the poet merely as a narrator, he must use him as a poet.

But why is not this second kind of imitation, which is so derogatory to the poet, equally so to the artist? If, before Homer's time, a series of pictures had been in existence, such as Count Caylus adduces from that poet, and we knew that he had derived his work from these pictures: would he not fall immeasurably in our estimation? If so, how is it that our admiration for the artist is nowise diminished, when he has really done nothing more than give expression in form and colour to the words of the poet?

The reason seems to be as follows:—In the case of the artist, we deem the execution to be more difficult than the invention; in that of the poet, the reverse holds good, and we deem the execution to be easier than the invention. If, therefore, Virgil had taken the entanglement of Laocoon and his sons from the sculptor's group, that merit, which in this picture of his we esteem the greater and more difficult of attainment, would be wanting, and only the lesser one would be left. For it is a far more difficult thing to first evolve this entanglement from the imagination than to express it in words. If, on the contrary, the artist had borrowed this entanglement from the poet, we should, notwithstanding, think none the less highly of him, though he were deprived of the merit of having invented it. For it is far more difficult to express a thing in marble than to express it in words; and, in weighing invention and representation against each other, we are always inclined to yield to the master just as much on the one side as we think we have received in excess on the other.

In some cases it redounds even more to the credit of the artist to have copied nature through the medium of the poet's imitation, than without it. The painter who, following the description of a Thomson, executes a beautiful landscape, has done more than he who copies it directly from nature. The latter sees his original before him; the former must first exert his imagination until he fancies he has it before him. The latter, acting upon vivid and sensible impressions, fashions a thing of beauty; the former does so from the weak and vague representations of arbitrary signs.

But this natural readiness to dispense with the merit of invention in the artist caused an equally natural indifference towards it to be developed in him. For, seeing that invention could never be his strong point, and that his highest merit would depend upon the execution, he ceased to care whether an invention was old or new; whether it had been made use of once or times without number; whether it was his own or that of another. He therefore remained within the pale of certain subjects, few in number, which had already become familiar to himself and to the public, and concentrated his whole power of invention upon mere variations of materials already known and upon fresh combinations of old objects. This is, in fact, the idea which the text-books on Painting associate with the word Invention; for, though they divide it into the artistic and the poetical, yet the latter does not extend to the production of the object itself, but is wholly confined to arrangement and expression.¹ It is invention, yet not the invention of a whole, but of single parts and their relative positions to one

¹ *Betrachtungen über die Malerei*, p. 159.

another. It is invention, but of that lower kind which Horace recommended to his tragic poet :

“ Tuque
Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,
Quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus.”¹

I say recommended, not enjoined. He recommended it as being easier, more convenient, more advantageous; he did not enjoin it as better and nobler in itself.

Indeed, the poet who treats a well-known story or well-known characters, is placed at a great advantage. He can pass over numerous cold details which would otherwise be indispensable in order to comprehend the whole; and the more quickly he makes himself intelligible to his audience, the sooner will he awaken their interest. This advantage is shared by the painter also, when his design is not unfamiliar to us; when, at the first glance, we recognise the intention and meaning of his whole composition; when we at once not only see that his characters are speaking, but also hear what they are saying. The most important effect depends upon the first glance; and, if the latter involves us in laborious reflections and vague conjectures with regard to it, our eagerness to be roused receives a check, and we avenge ourselves on the unintelligible artist by hardening ourselves against the expression; and woe to him, if he has sacrificed beauty to expression! For then nothing is left to excite our attention or induce us to linger over his work; we are displeased at what we behold, and know not what to think when we see it.

Let us now combine these two propositions: firstly, that invention and novelty in his subjects is by no means

¹ *De Art. Poet.*, 128-130.

what we most value in the painter; and secondly, that a familiar subject furthers and facilitates the effect of his art: then I maintain that the reason why he so rarely ventures upon new subjects is not to be found, as Count Caylus would have us believe, in his indolence, his ignorance, or the difficulty attending the mechanical portion of an art, which demands his utmost zeal and all his time; it will be found to lie deeper, and we shall perhaps even be inclined to praise as a wise and, to us, useful forbearance on the part of the artist, what at first appeared to be a limitation of his art and a curtailment of our pleasure. On this point I have no fear of being contradicted by experience. The painters will no doubt thank the Count for his good intentions, but will scarcely avail themselves of his opinion as generally as he seems to expect. Should they, however, do so, another Caylus would be required, a hundred years hence, to recall the old subjects to our minds and bring the artist back into that field where others before him had already gathered such undying laurels. Or ought we to expect the public to be as learned as is the connoisseur by the aid of his books, and to be intimately acquainted with every scene in history and fable which might make a beautiful painting? The artists would have done better, I admit, if, since Raphael's time, they had taken Homer, instead of Ovid, for their text-book. But as they have not done so, let the public remain in its old groove, and let not its enjoyment be rendered more difficult than enjoyment ought to be, in order to become what it is.

Protogenes had painted the mother of Aristotle. What remuneration the philosopher bestowed upon him, I know not. But either in place of, or in addition to, a remuneration, he gave him a piece of advice which was

worth more than the remuneration itself. For I cannot imagine that his advice was merely intended as a piece of flattery. Nay, it was rather because he fully appreciated the necessity of art to make itself intelligible to all, that he advised him to paint the exploits of Alexander, which were, at that time, on everybody's lips, and would, he foresaw, continue to live in the memory of posterity. But Protogenes had not the sense to follow this advice; *impetus animi*, says Pliny, *et quædam artis libido*,¹ a certain haughtiness in art, a kind of longing after what was strange and uncommon, led him to choose entirely different designs. He preferred to paint the story of an Ialysus, a Cydippe, and such-like, whereof we to-day cannot form the slightest conjecture as to what they represented.

¹ Plinius, xxxv. 36, 20.

CHAPTER XII.

HOMER treats two kinds of beings and actions: visible and invisible. This distinction cannot be rendered in Painting, in which art everything is visible, and visible in one way only.

When, therefore, Count Caylus unites the pictures of invisible actions in an uninterrupted series with those of the visible; when, in pictures of mixed actions, in which visible and invisible beings take part, he does not, and perhaps cannot, point out how the latter (which should be discernible to us alone, who behold the picture) are to be introduced so as not to become visible to the persons in the painting itself, or, at least, not to appear necessarily to be so: the whole series, as well as single pieces here and there, must of necessity be thereby rendered extremely confusing, unintelligible, and contradictory.

Yet, with book in hand, this error might ultimately be remedied. Only the worst of it is this, that in effacing the distinction, in painting, between visible and invisible beings, all those characteristic traits, which raise the latter and higher class above the former and lower, at once disappear.

For instance, when the gods, disputing over the fate of the Trojans, at last take up arms against each other:

the poet¹ represents the whole of this contest as being carried on invisibly, thus allowing the imagination full scope to magnify the scene, and to picture to itself the persons and actions of the gods as great and as far elevated above common humanity as it will. But painting must adopt a visible scene, the various necessary parts of which form a standard for the persons acting in it; a standard, which is ever present to the eye, and which, by its disproportion to the higher beings, turns into monsters, upon the flat surface of the artist, those higher beings, which retained their greatness in the description of the poet.

Minerva, whom Mars in this contest first assails, draws back, and, with mighty hand, takes up from the ground a large, rough, black stone, which, once upon a time, the united hands of men had rolled thither for a landmark.² In order to fully realise the size of this stone, it must be borne in mind that Homer represents his heroes as being as strong again as the strongest man of his own time; and yet the former, he tells us, were far surpassed in strength by the men whom Nestor had known in his youth. Now I ask: If the stone which Minerva hurls at Mars was set up for a landmark, not by one man, but by a number of men in the time of Nestor's youth—of what stature must the goddess be represented? If her stature is proportioned to the size of the stone, the marvellous at once disappears. A man who is thrice as big as I am may naturally be expected to be able to hurl a stone three times as great as I can. But if the stature of the goddess is not proportioned to the size of the stone, the painting will exhibit a striking improbability, the offensiveness of which is not removed by the

¹ *Iliad*, xxi. 385.

² *Iliad*, xxi. 403.

cold reflection that a goddess must possess superhuman strength. Where I see a greater effect, there I expect to see also greater causes to produce that effect.

And Mars, struck down by this mighty stone :

Ἑπτὰ δ' ἐπέσχε πέλεθρα,

covered seven hides. Now, the painter cannot possibly represent him as being of this extraordinary size. But unless he does so, it will not be Mars who is lying on the ground, not the Homeric Mars, but an ordinary warrior.

Longinus says that it has often appeared to him that Homer intended to exalt his men to gods and reduce his gods to men. Painting effects this reduction, and destroys, in so doing, the very means, whereby the poets raise their gods above their godlike men. The stature, strength, and speed, whereof Homer always reserves a higher and more wonderful degree for his gods than he gives to his greatest heroes, must, in the painting, sink to the common level of humanity; and Jupiter and Agamemnon, Apollo and Achilles, Ajax and Mars, become absolutely the same beings, their identity being revealed only by outward and conventional symbols.

The means adopted in painting to give us to understand that, in its compositions, this or that object is to be considered as invisible, consist of a thin cloud, in which it is concealed from the eyes of the other persons in the picture. This cloud appears to have been borrowed from Homer himself, for whenever, in the heat of the fray, one of the principal heroes gets into danger, from which no power other than divine can save him, the poet makes the protecting deity surround him with a dense cloud, or with darkness, and thus lead

him safely away. In this way is Paris rescued by Venus,¹ Idæus by Neptune,² Hector by Apollo.³ And this mist, this cloud, Caylus, when he proposes to paint such occurrences, never fails to recommend to the artist. But surely any one can see that, with the poet, this concealment in mist or night is nothing more than a poetical expression to denote the act of rendering invisible. I have, therefore, always been surprised to find this poetical expression rendered concrete, and a real cloud introduced into the painting, behind which the hero stands concealed, as though behind a screen, from his foe. This was not the poet's intention; and to do this is to step beyond the limits of painting. For the cloud is here simply a hieroglyphic, a mere symbolical token, which does not make the rescued hero invisible, but says to the beholders, "You must imagine him to be invisible." It is here no better than the descriptive labels which issue from the mouths of the figures in old Gothic paintings.

Homer, it is true, represents Achilles, while Apollo is carrying off Hector, as thrusting his spear thrice into the dense mist: *τρίς δ' ἥερα τύψε βαθείαν*.⁴ But even this, in the language of the poet, means nothing more than that Achilles was so enraged that he continued aiming three times ere he became aware that his foe no longer stood before him. Achilles saw no real mist; and the whole device employed by the gods, to render their heroes invisible, consisted not in covering them with a mist, but in rapidly bearing them away. Only, in order to give us to understand at the same time that they were snatched away so quickly that no human eye could

¹ *Iliad*, iii. 381.

² Or rather Vulcan, *ibid.* v. 23.

³ *Ibid.* xx. 444.

⁴ *Ibid.* xx. 446.

follow them, the poet first conceals them in a dense mist; not that the others saw a mist in the place of the person who was carried off, but because we think of that which is in a mist as invisible. Accordingly, he occasionally reverses the position, and, instead of rendering the object invisible, he causes the subject to be struck with blindness. Thus Neptune obscures the eyes of Achilles when he rescues Æneas from his murderous hands by transporting him at one bound from the midst of the tumult to the rear of the fight.¹ As a matter of fact, Achilles' eyes are no more obscured here than in the previous case the rescued heroes are concealed in a cloud; but the poet adds the one or the other figure of speech merely in order that he may thereby render clearer to us the extreme rapidity with which his heroes are carried off, and which we term vanishing.

The painters, however, have not only appropriated the Homeric mist in those cases where Homer himself has, or would have, made use of it—in cases of vanishing or disappearance; but also on every occasion where the spectator is supposed to behold something in the painting which some or all of the characters in it do not perceive. Minerva was visible to Achilles alone when she restrained him from coming to blows with Agamemnon. I know of no other way to express this, says Caylus, than by concealing her by a cloud, on the side nearest to the rest of the assembly. This is totally opposed to the poet's intention. His gods are by nature invisible; and no blinding, or withdrawal of light, is needed to make them so.² On the contrary, an enlightenment

¹ *Iliad*, xx. 321.

² Homer, it is true, makes his divinities also conceal themselves sometimes in a cloud, but only when they wish to avoid being seen

and extension of mortal vision is required to render them visible. It is not enough, therefore, that, in painting, the cloud is an arbitrary and not a natural symbol; this arbitrary symbol does not even possess the distinct meaning which, as such, it should have, for it is used indiscriminately, either to represent the visible as invisible, or the invisible as visible.

by their fellow-deities. Thus, in *Iliad*, xiv. 282, where Juno and Sleep go to Mount Ida, the cunning goddess had every reason for escaping the eyes of Venus, whose girdle she had borrowed under the pretext of making a very different expedition.

CHAPTER XIII.

IF Homer's works were entirely lost, and nothing remained to us of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but a series of paintings from them, similar to those of which Caylus has given the outlines: would such paintings—assuming them to be the work of the greatest master—enable us to form that conception, I will not say of the whole poet, but merely of his descriptive talent, which we now possess?

Let us see, by taking the first picture that suggests itself. Suppose it is the painting of the plague.¹ What does the artist's canvas show us? Dead bodies and burning funeral-pyres; the dying busied with the dead; and the enraged god, seated upon a cloud, shooting forth his arrows. The greatest wealth of this picture is poverty in the poet. For, were we to try and restore Homer by its aid: what could we make him say? "Thereupon Apollo waxed wroth and shot his arrows among the army of the Greeks. Many of the Greeks died and their bodies were burnt." Now read Homer himself:—

βῆ δὲ κατ' Ουλύμποιο καρήνων χωόμενος κῆρ, etc.

As far as life is above the painting, so far is the poet, in this passage, above the painter. Apollo, in his wrath,

¹ *Iliad*, i. 44-53. *Tableaux tirés de l'Illiade*, p. 70.

seizes his bow and quiver, and steps down from the peaks of Olympus. I not only see him descend, I hear him. At every step of the furious god, the arrows rattle upon his shoulders. He strides on, like the night; and now he sits over against the ships, and, amidst the fearful clang of his silver bow, he launches forth his first shaft at the mules and dogs. Then, taking a second and more poisonous one, he sends it into the midst of the men themselves; and on all sides wooden pyres with corpses blaze unceasingly. It is impossible to render in any other language the musical effect of the words which the poet uses. It is equally impossible even to guess it from the material painting, though this is the least of the advantages possessed by the picture of the poet over that of the painter. The principal advantage, which the former possesses, is this: that the poet leads us through a whole gallery of pictures, as it were, up to the last one, which is alone portrayed in the material painting.

But perhaps the plague is not an advantageous subject for painting. Here is another, calculated to give more pleasure to the eye—the gods in council drinking.¹ An open, golden palace; arbitrary groups of the most beautiful and adorable forms, cup in hand, served by Hebe, eternal youth. What architecture, what masses of light and shade, what contrasts, what variety of expression! Where shall I begin, and where leave off, feasting my eyes? If the painter thus enraptures me, how much more so will the poet! I turn to him, and find myself—deceived. I find four good but plain verses, which might be suitable for a motto beneath a

¹ *Iliad*, iv. 1-4. *Tableaux tirés de l'Iliade*, p. 30.

painting and contain the materials for a painting, but which do not, of themselves, form one.

Οἱ δὲ θεοὶ παρ' Ἰηλὶ καθήμενοι ἡγορόωντο, etc.

An Apollonius, or even a still more indifferent poet, could not have expressed himself worse; and Homer is here as much inferior to the painter, as, in the preceding case, the painter was inferior to him.

Moreover, Caylus, in the whole of the fourth book of the *Iliad*, cannot find a single picture with the exception of these four lines. Greatly as the fourth book is distinguished, says he, by the manifold exhortations to the fray, by a wealth of brilliant and prominent characters, and by the art employed by the painter in showing us the multitude which he wishes to set in motion; it is, nevertheless, entirely unsuited for painting. He should have added: however much it otherwise abounds in what are termed poetical pictures. For indeed, they occur in as great a profusion and perfection in the fourth book as in any other. Where will you find a picture more elaborate or more impressive than that of Pandarus violating the truce at the instigation of Minerva and aiming his shaft at Menelaus? Or that of the Grecian army advancing? Or that of the mutual charge? Or again, that of the deed, whereby Ulysses avenges the death of his friend Leucus?

But what follows from this fact, that not a few of the finest descriptions in Homer afford no pictures to the artist, and that the latter can borrow pictures from the former where he himself has none? That those, which he has, and which the artist can use, would be very poor pictures if they displayed no more than could be shown by the artist? What else follows but that my

above question is decided in the negative? That from the material paintings, the subjects for which are afforded by Homer's poems, however numerous and excellent they may be, no conclusion can be drawn with regard to the artistic talent possessed by the poet.

CHAPTER XIV.

BUT if this be the case, and if a poem may be a very suggestive one for the painter and yet not in itself descriptive, or, *vice versâ*, a very descriptive one and yet not suggestive to the painter, then the theory advanced by Count Caylus falls to the ground, his aim being to make suitability to the artist the test of poets, and to decide their rank according to the number of paintings which they offer the artist.¹

Far be it from us to allow this idea, even by our silence, to gain the semblance of a law. Milton would be the first to fall an innocent victim to it. For it actually seems that the contemptuous judgment passed on him by Caylus was not based upon national taste, but was rather a consequence of his assumed law. The loss of sight, he says, is perhaps the strongest point of resemblance between Milton and Homer. Milton, it is true, cannot fill picture-galleries. But if the sphere of my bodily eye, so long as I retain the use of it, must of necessity be the sphere of my inner eye also, I should greatly value the loss of the former, as I should thus be freed from this limitation.

"Paradise Lost" is not less the first epic poem after Homer, because it offers but few subjects for painting, than the story of the Passion of Christ is a poem,

¹ *Tableaux tirés de l'Illiade*, Avert., p. v.

because one can scarcely touch upon a single point in it which has not engaged the attention of a number of the greatest artists. The Evangelists relate the fact in its barest possible simplicity, and the artist makes use of its numerous parts, though the former, on their side, may not have shown the slightest spark of artistic genius in relating it. Some facts lend themselves to painting, others do not; and the historian can relate the former as inartistically as the poet has the power of representing the latter artistically.

To hold a different opinion from this is to allow oneself to be misled by an ambiguity of terms. A poetical painting need not of necessity be convertible into a material one; but every feature, every combination of divers features, by the aid of which the poet presents his object so vividly to us that we become more conscious of this object than of his words, is picturesque, and may be termed a picture, because it brings us nearer to that degree of illusion of which the material picture is especially capable, and which is most quickly and easily produced by the material picture.

CHAPTER XV.

Now the poet, as experience shows, can also raise this degree of illusion in us by the representation of other than visible objects. Consequently he has at his command whole classes of pictures which the artist must of necessity renounce. Dryden's "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" is full of musical pictures which do not lend themselves to the artist's brush. I will not, however, dwell upon such examples, which, after all, only go to prove that colours are not sounds and ears not eyes.

I will confine myself to the pictures of visible objects only, which are common to both poet and artist. How is it that some poetical pictures of this nature are unserviceable to the artist, and, *vice versâ*, some actual paintings, when treated by the poet, lose the greater part of their effect?

Examples will serve to guide me. I repeat: the picture of Pandarus, in the fourth book of the *Iliad*, is one of the most elaborate and illusive to be found in the whole of Homer. From the point where he seizes his bow to the flight of the arrow every movement is depicted, and these various movements follow one another so closely and yet are so distinctly entered upon that any one unacquainted with the use of the bow could learn it merely from this picture. Pandarus takes out his bow, fixes the string, opens his quiver,

selects a new, well-feathered arrow and sets it upon the string, draws back the string under the notch together with the arrow, the string approaches his breast, the iron point of the arrow comes close to the bow, the ends of the large, curved bow fly apart with a sharp twang, the string vibrates, the arrow has shot forth and is swiftly speeding towards its mark.¹

Caylus cannot have overlooked this splendid picture. What reason, then, can he have had for considering it unsuited to artistic treatment? and what caused him to think that the assembly of the gods drinking in council afforded it a more fitting subject? There are visible objects in the former scene, as well as in the latter; and what does the painter need beyond visible objects to fill his canvas?

The difficulty must be this. Although both these subjects, inasmuch as they are visible, are equally suitable for painting, strictly speaking, yet there is this essential difference between them: that, whereas the former depicts a visible and progressive action, the various parts of which happen one after another in point of time, the latter, on the contrary, depicts a visible and stationary action, the various parts of which are developed side by side in point of space. Now, seeing that painting, owing to its signs or means of imitation, which it can combine in space only, is compelled entirely to renounce time, progressive actions, as such, lie without its province, and it must limit itself to simultaneous actions or to mere figures, which by their attitudes lead us to infer an action. Poetry, on the other hand,——

¹ *Iliad*, iv. 105.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOWEVER, I will try to trace the matter from its first principles.

I reason as follows: If it is true that Painting employs in its imitations entirely different means or symbols from those adopted by Poetry—*i.e.*, the former using forms and colours in space, the latter, on the other hand, articulate sounds in time,—if it is admitted that these symbols must be in suitable relation to the thing symbolised, then symbols placed in juxtaposition can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts exist in juxtaposition; and consecutive symbols can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts are consecutive.

Subjects, the wholes or parts of which exist in juxtaposition, are termed bodies. Consequently bodies, with their visible properties, are the special subjects of painting.

Subjects, the wholes or parts of which are consecutive, are generally termed actions. Consequently actions are the special subjects of poetry.

Yet all bodies do not exist in space only, but also in time. They continue to exist, and may, at each moment of their duration, assume a different appearance or stand in a different combination. Each of these momentary appearances and combinations is the effect of a preceding one, and may be the cause of a subsequent one, thus

forming, as it were, the central point of an action. Consequently painting can also imitate actions, but only indirectly by means of bodies.

On the other hand, actions cannot take place by themselves, but must be connected with certain beings. Now, so far as these beings are bodies, or are regarded as such, poetry also paints bodies, but only indirectly by means of actions.

In its co-existing compositions painting can only make use of a single moment in the course of an action, and must therefore choose the one which is most suggestive and which serves most clearly to explain what has preceded and what follows.

In like manner, poetry, in its progressive imitations, can only make use of a single property of bodies, and must, therefore, choose that which awakens the most sensible image of the body in question, in that aspect in which it is to be regarded.

Hence follows the rule as to the unity of descriptive epithets and moderation in the representation of bodily objects.

I should place less confidence in this dry chain of reasoning, were it not that I find it fully confirmed by the practice of Homer, or rather, that it was the practice of Homer himself that led me to it. These principles alone enable us to determine and explain the sublime style of the Greek, and also to assign a due value to the opposite style of so many modern poets, who would seek to emulate the painter in a department in which he must inevitably prove superior to them.

I find that Homer describes nothing but progressive actions, and that he paints bodies and single objects only in so far as they contribute to these actions, and then

generally by but a single touch. What wonder, then, that where Homer paints, the painter finds nothing or but little to occupy him, and reaps a harvest in those cases only where the story presents an assemblage of beautiful bodies, in beautiful attitudes, and in a space advantageous to art, however little the poet may avail himself of these bodies, these attitudes, and this space? Take, one by one, the entire series of pictures from Homer, which Caylus has proposed, and in every case will you find these remarks confirmed.

I will now leave the Count, who would make the artist's palette the touchstone of the poet, in order to give a fuller explanation of Homer's style.

For one particular thing, I say, Homer usually has but a single characteristic. A ship is, to him, now the black ship, now the hollow ship, now the swift ship; at most, the well-rowed, black ship. Beyond this he does not go in describing a ship. But when he treats of the sailing, setting-out, and hauling-up of the ship, he gives us an elaborate picture, of which the painter would have to make five or six different pictures, if he wished to portray the scene in its entirety.

Though special circumstances may at times compel Homer to fix our attention longer upon a single object, yet even then he gives us no picture suitable for the artist's brush; but he contrives, by innumerable devices, to represent this single object in a series of successive moments, in each of which it assumes a different appearance, and in the last of which the painter must seize it, in order to show us in its completeness what we see the poet completing. If, for example, Homer wishes to show us Juno's chariot, he makes Hebe put it together, piece by piece, before our eyes. We see the wheels, the

axle, the seat, the pole, the traces and straps; not as they all appear together, but as they are being joined together by the hands of Hebe. The wheels alone receive more than a single feature from the poet, who shows us, one by one, the eight bronze spokes, the golden felloes, the brazen tires, and the silver naves. It might almost be said that, as there were more wheels than one, he had to give a longer description of them, proportionate to the time required in reality for fastening them on.¹

When Homer wishes to show us how Agamemnon was clad, he makes the king don his attire, piece by piece, in our presence: his soft tunic, his large cloak, his beautiful sandals, and his sword. Then he is ready and seizes his sceptre.² We see the garments whilst the poet depicts the act of dressing. Another would have described them in detail, down to the smallest fringe, and we should have seen nothing of the action. And if he wishes to give us a more complete and exact picture of this important sceptre, which is here called merely the paternal, ever imperishable sceptre (just as, in another passage, he refers to a similar one as χρυσέοις ἡλίοισι πεπαρμένον—the sceptre studded with golden nails)—what does Homer do? Does he, in addition to the golden nails, also describe the wood and the carved head? He might have done so, had the description been intended for heraldic purposes, so that in times to come another might be made exactly like it. And I am sure that many a modern poet would have given us such a heraldic description of it, under the sincere impression that he himself had really given us a picture, because he had enabled the painter to do so. But what matters it to Homer how far he leaves the painter behind

¹ *Iliad*, v. 722-731.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 42-46.

him? Instead of showing us a picture of the sceptre, he gives us its history: first, it is wrought by Vulcan; next, it shines in the hands of Jupiter; then it adorns the dignity of Mercury; at one time it is the martial wand of the warlike Pelops; at another, the shepherd's staff of the peaceful Atreus; and so forth.¹ In the end I am better acquainted with this sceptre than if a painter had exhibited it before my eyes or a second Vulcan delivered it into my hands. I should not be surprised to find that one of the old commentators of Homer had admired this passage as the most perfect allegory of the origin, progress, establishment, and final inheritance of regal power among men. I should indeed smile if I read that Vulcan, who wrought the sceptre, represented, in the shape of fire, which is most indispensable to man's existence, the alleviation of his wants generally, which first induced men to submit to the authority of an individual; or that the first king had been a son of Time (Ζεὺς Κρονίων), a venerable patriarch, who was willing to share his power with, or delegate it entirely to, an eloquent and clever man, a Hermes (Διακτόρῳ Ἀργειφόντῃ); that the clever orator, at a time when the young state was menaced by foreign intruders, had resigned his power into the hands of the bravest warrior (Πέλοπι πλεξίππῳ); and that the brave warrior, after subduing the foe and securing the kingdom from danger, had transferred it to his son, who, as a peaceful ruler and a benevolent shepherd of his people (ποιμὴν λαῶν), had introduced them to a life of pleasure and superfluity; an act which, after his death, paved the way for the wealthiest of his relatives (πολύαρνι Θυέστῃ) to obtain, by dint of gifts and bribery, and thereafter to secure to his family

¹ *Iliad*, ii. 101-108.

for ever, as a purchased possession, that power which had hitherto been the gift of confidence, and had appeared a burden, rather than a dignity, in the eyes of merit. I should smile, but my esteem would be strengthened for the poet in whom one could find so full a meaning. All this, however, is beside the point, and I merely look upon the history of the sceptre as a device adopted by the poet, in order to fix our attention upon a single object, without entering into a cold description of its component parts. When Achilles swears by his sceptre to avenge the contempt with which Agamemnon has treated him, Homer again gives us the history of this sceptre. We see it growing upon the mountain side; the axe severs it from the trunk; the leaves and bark are stripped off, and it is rendered suitable for the judges of the people to use as a symbol of their divine office.¹ Homer's aim was here not so much to describe two wands, differing in material and shape, as to give us a clear image of the difference of power symbolised by these wands. The former, the work of Vulcan; the latter, hewn on the mountain-side by an unknown hand: the former, the heirloom of a noble house; the latter, destined to fill the hand of any to whom it might fall: the former, wielded by a monarch over many isles and the whole of Argos; the latter, borne from amid the Greeks by one who, together with others, had been entrusted with the legislature. This was the real difference between the positions of Agamemnon and Achilles; a difference which Achilles himself, despite the blindness of his fury, could not but admit.

Yet not in those cases alone, where Homer attaches a deeper significance of this kind to his descriptions, but

¹ *Iliad*, i. 234-239.

also in those in which he gives a simple picture, devoid of any secondary meaning, will this picture be found to resolve itself into a kind of history of the object, his aim here being to make those of its parts which, in actual life, we see in juxtaposition, follow one another in a like natural order in his picture, thus keeping pace, as it were, with the flow of the narrative. When, for instance, he wishes to paint the bow of Pandarus: a bow of horn, of such and such a length, well-polished, and tipped at either end with gold,—what does he do? Does he give a dry enumeration of all these details one by one? Not at all; this would be giving us a specification or account of such a bow, but not a picture of it. He commences with the chase of the wild goat, of whose horns the bow was constructed. Pandarus had watched the animal's movements among the crags and laid it low; its horns were of an exceptional size, and he therefore decided to make a bow of them; they are accordingly fitted up, the craftsman joins them, polishes them, and adds the golden tips.¹ And thus, as I have said, we see the poet completing, step by step, that which the painter can only show us duly completed.

My task would be an endless one, were I to enumerate all the examples of a similar nature. They will suggest themselves in abundance to the mind of every reader, who is familiar with his Homer.

¹ *Iliad*, iv. 105-111.

CHAPTER XVII.

BUT, it will be urged, the symbols of Poetry are not only progressive, but also arbitrary; and, as arbitrary symbols, they are of course capable of denoting bodies as they exist in space. Homer himself affords examples of this, and his shield of Achilles may be adduced as the most striking instance of how diffusely, and yet poetically, a single object may be described by taking its component parts separately.

I will dispose of this twofold objection. I call it twofold, because a logical conclusion is valid even in the absence of examples; and, on the other hand, the example afforded by Homer carries weight with me, even though I may be unable to justify it logically.

It is true that, since the symbols of speech are arbitrary, it may be possible, by their means, to represent the parts of a body consecutively just as easily as they stand side by side in actual life. But this is a peculiarity of language and its symbols in general, and not in so far as they are best adapted to the aim of poetry. The poet's intention is not merely to render himself intelligible and to make his descriptions clear and perspicuous; this suffices the needs of the prose writer. The poet must make those conceptions, which he awakens in us, so vivid that, owing to their rapidity, we imagine that we feel the true, actual impression which would be produced in us by the objects them-

selves, and cease, during this momentary impression, to be conscious of his words; of the means, that is, which he employs to produce it. This was the source of the explanation which we have given of poetical painting. But the poet should always produce a picture; and we will now see how far bodies, the parts of which are in juxtaposition, lend themselves to such a picture.

How do we arrive at a clear conception of an object in space? We first look at its parts singly, then at the combination of these parts; and lastly, at the whole. Our senses perform these various operations with such marvellous rapidity, that they appear to us to be but a single one; and this rapidity is absolutely necessary, if we are to form a conception of the whole, which latter is nothing more than the resultant of our conception of the parts and of their combination. Now, supposing that the poet could lead us in the most beautiful order, from one part of the object to another; supposing that he were capable of representing the separate parts in combination ever so clearly to us: how much time would be required in order to do so? That which the eye takes in at a glance, he enumerates slowly and by degrees; and it often happens that, by the time he describes the last trait, we have already forgotten the first; and yet it is from these traits that we are to form our conception of the whole. To the eye the parts, once seen, are constantly present; it can scan them again and again. To the ear, on the other hand, those parts which have already been described are lost, unless the memory retains them. And even if they are thus retained, what trouble and effort is needed to recall their impressions, each in due order and with due vividness, and to review them simultaneously in one's mind

with but moderate rapidity, in order to attain to any possible conception of the whole!

Take, for example, an extract which may be called a masterpiece of its kind:—¹

“ Far o’er the common herd of vulgar plants,
 The noble gentian high his head doth raise;
 A whole array of flowers his lead obeys,
 E’en his blue brother bow’d aliegiance grants.
 ’Mid stalks grey-tinted, bursting into sight,
 His flowers’ light gold in circled rays is seen,
 And smooth, white leaves, bestreak’d with darkest green,
 Resplendent with the dew-drop’s glistening light.
 O Law most just! Here Power unites with Grace,
 In body fair a fairer soul has place.

See where yon lowly plant creeps, like grey mist;
 Its leaves fair Nature like a cross hath made;
 Two golden beaks are on the flower display’d,
 Borne by a bird with plumes of amethyst.
 Yon leaflet casts upon the sunlit stream
 Its finger-shaped reflection, green and bright,
 And a striped star reveals in rays of white
 The flower’s soft snow, tinged with a purple gleam.
 On trodden heath the rose and emerald bloom,
 And craggy hills a purple garb assume.”

Here we have herbs and flowers, which the learned poet paints with great art and according to nature. He paints, but without illusion. I do not mean to say that to any one, who had never beheld these herbs and flowers, his description would not give anything like an idea of them. It may be that all poetical pictures require a previous knowledge of the objects of which they treat. Nor will I deny that, in the case in point, a person possessing such a knowledge might derive from the poet

¹ See Von Haller’s “Die Alpen,” [I have ventured to render these verses in English.—TR.]

a more vivid conception of some of the parts. I would only ask him: how about the conception of the whole? For if this also is to be more vivid, no single parts must be brought into prominence; but the higher light must seem distributed to all alike, and our imagination must be enabled to survey them all with the same rapidity, that it may at once construct from them that which is at once seen in actual life. Is this the case here? If not, how could it be maintained "that the truest delineation of a painter would appear absolutely weak and dull in comparison with this poetical description"?¹ For the latter is far inferior to what could be expressed upon a surface by lines and colours; and the critic, who praises it in these exaggerated terms, must have surveyed it from a totally false point of view; he must have taken into account the extraneous ornaments wherewith the poet has interwoven it, its elevation above vegetable life, and the development of those inner perfections for which external beauty serves but as the husk, rather than this beauty itself and the degree of vividness and faithfulness of the representation, which the painter and the poet can respectively exhibit. Yet only the latter point is here of importance; and whoever maintains that the mere lines—

"Mid stalks grey-tinted, bursting into sight,
His flowers' light gold in circled rays is seen,
And smooth, white leaves, bestreak'd with darkest green,
Resplendent with the dew-drop's glistening light,"

are, as regards the impression produced by them, fit to vie with the imitation of a Huysum, can never have questioned his feelings or must be deliberately prepared to belie them. With the flower itself before one's eyes,

¹ Breitingen, *Kritische Dichtkunst*, Pt. ii., p. 807.

a beautiful effect might be produced by reciting these lines; but, taken by themselves, they convey little or no impression. In each word I hear the elaborating poet, but I am far from beholding the object itself.

Once more, therefore: I do not deny to language in general the power of representing a corporeal whole according to its parts; it can do so, because its symbols, although consecutive, are nevertheless arbitrary. But I do deny this power to language as the instrument of poetry, because to such verbal descriptions of objects there is entirely wanting that illusion which constitutes the principal end of poetry, and this illusion, I maintain, must be wanting to them, because what is co-existent in the body is made to clash with what is consecutive in language; and though by the former resolving itself into the latter, we find it easier to divide the whole into its parts, yet at the same time it becomes exceedingly difficult and often impossible for us to ultimately reconstruct the whole from these parts.

In all cases, then, where it is not a question of illusion, but merely of comprehension on the part of the reader, and where the writer confines himself to clear and, as far as possible, complete ideas, these bodily descriptions, which are excluded from the field of poetry, are quite in place; and not only the prose writer, but even the didactic poet (for where he is didactic he ceases to be a poet) may avail himself thereof with great advantage. Thus, for instance, Virgil, in his *Georgics* describes a cow fit for breeding:—

“Optima torvae
Forma bovis, cui turpe caput, cui plurima cervix,” etc.¹

¹ *Georg.*, lib. iii. 51.

Or a beautiful colt:—

“ Illi ardua cervix,
Argutumque caput, brevis alvus obesaque terga;
Luxuriatque toris animosum pectus,” etc.¹

Any one can see that the poet here attaches a greater importance to the description of the different parts than to the whole. His aim is to give us the characteristics of a beautiful colt or a useful cow, so that we may be enabled, on meeting with one or more of them, to form an opinion of their respective qualities; it is a matter of indifference to him whether or not these characteristics can be combined so as to form a vivid picture.

With the exception of this use of them, detailed descriptions of material objects, unless treated by the above-mentioned Homeric method of transforming what is co-existent in them into what is really successive, have at all times been regarded by the best judges as mere cold and trivial work requiring little or no genius. When the poetaster can do nothing more, says Horace, he at once begins to paint a grove, an altar, a brook meandering through pleasant fields, a rushing stream, or a rainbow:

“ Lucus et ara Dianae,
Et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros,
Aut flumen Rhenum, aut pluvius describitur arcus.”²

Pope, in his later years, looked back with contempt upon the descriptive efforts of his poetic childhood. He expressly insisted that whoever would make himself worthy of the name of poet, should renounce the taste for descriptive writing as early as possible, and declared a purely descriptive poem to be like a banquet consisting

¹ *Georg.*, lib. iii. 79.

² *De Art. Poet.* 16.

of nothing but sauces.¹ Of Herr von Kleist I can aver that he attached but little value to his poem on "Spring." Had he lived longer, he would have altered its form entirely. He intended to methodise it, and reflected upon some means whereby the numerous images, which he seemed to have gathered here and there, at haphazard, from the infinite expanse of revivified creation, might be made to arise and follow one another in a natural order before his eyes. He would at the same time have followed the advice which Marmontel, doubtlessly referring to his *Eclogues*, gave to several German poets; he would have converted a series of images, thinly interspersed with feelings, into a succession of feelings, but sparingly interwoven with images.²

¹ Prologue to the *Satires*, v 340:—

"That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long,
But stoop'd to Truth, and moralis'd his song."

Ibid. v. 147:—

"Who could take offence,
While pure Description held the place of Sense?"

² *Poétique Française*, tom. ii. p 501:—"J'écrivais ces réflexions avant que les essais des Allemands dans ce genre (l'Eglogue) fussent connus parmi nous. Ils ont exécuté ce que j'avais conçu; et s'ils parviennent à donner plus au moral et moins au détail des peintures physiques, ils excelleront dans ce genre, plus riche, plus vaste, plus fécond, et infiniment plus naturel et plus moral que celui de la galanterie champêtre."

CHAPTER XVIII.

YET could even Homer himself be said to have fallen into these cold descriptions of material objects?

I trust at any rate that there are but few passages in his works which could be adduced in support of this; and, for my part, I feel certain that those passages are of such a kind as rather to confirm that very rule to which they are supposed to form an exception.

Once more, then: the poet has to deal with sequence in time, the painter with space.

To introduce two points of time, necessarily remote from each other, into one and the same painting (as has been done by Francesco Mazzuoli, who shows us the rape of the Sabines and also their ultimate reconciliation of their husbands and relations; and by Titian, who depicts the whole story of the prodigal son, his dissolute life, his misery and final repentance), is an intrusion, on the part of the painter, upon the domain of the poet, which good taste will never justify.

To attempt to give the reader a picture of the whole, by enumerating one by one the several parts or objects which, in actual life, must necessarily be taken in at one glance, if an impression is to be gained of the whole, is an intrusion, on the part of the poet, upon the domain of the painter, and one on which he squanders much imagination to no purpose.

Painting and poetry are like two equitable and friendly neighbouring powers, which, while not permitting either

to take unbecoming liberties in the midst of the other's dominions, yet allow a mutual forbearance to reign on their frontiers, both sides thus offering a peaceful compensation for the minor aggressions which they have been compelled, by circumstances and in haste, to make upon one another's rights.

In support of this view I will not cite the fact that in great historical paintings the single moment is almost invariably somewhat extended, and that perhaps there is not to be found a single painting, very rich in figures, in which every one of them displays the exact motion and position coincident with the movement of the main action; in one case they are slightly accelerated, in another slightly retarded. This freedom the artist must counterbalance by a certain dexterity in the arrangement of his characters, by bringing them forward into prominence or placing them in the background, thus allowing them to take a more or less momentary part in that which is occurring. I will merely quote a remark made by Herr Mengs with regard to Raphael's drapery. "With him," he says, "every fold has its proper cause; either in its own weight or in the motion of the limbs. Sometimes the folds enable us to tell what has preceded; herein, too, Raphael has endeavoured to find significance. It can be seen, by the position of the folds, whether an arm or leg has been moved forwards or backwards into the attitude which it actually occupies; whether a limb has been, or is being, moved from a contracted position into a straightened one, or whether it was extended at first and is being contracted."¹ It cannot be denied that, in a case of this kind, the artist manages to combine

¹ *Gedanken über die Schönheit und über den Geschmack in der Malerei*, p. 69.

two different moments in one. When, for example, a foot, which was extended behind, is drawn forward, that portion of the drapery which rests upon it must immediately follow it, unless the material be very stiff, in which case it would be entirely unsuitable for painting; and at no moment, therefore, could it form any other folds than those required by the actual position of the limb. But if other folds are introduced, then the limb is represented at the present moment and the drapery at the one previous to it. Yet, who would, in spite of this, insist upon a minute exactitude on the part of the artist who finds it to his advantage to represent both these moments simultaneously? Who would not rather praise him for having had the understanding and courage to commit an insignificant error for the sake of reaching a higher degree of perfection in the expression.

A similar indulgence must be granted to the poet. In progressive imitation he is, strictly speaking, not allowed at any one moment to deal with more than a single side or a single property of his material objects. But if his language is happily so constituted as to enable him to express this by but a single word, why should he not be permitted occasionally to add a second? why not, if it repays the trouble, a third, or even a fourth? I have said that Homer when speaking, for instance, of a ship, calls it merely the black ship, or the hollow ship, or the swift ship; at most, the well-rowed, black ship,—I am, of course, speaking of his style generally. Here and there we come across a passage in which he adds a third descriptive epithet: *καμπύλα κύκλα, χάλκεα, ὀκτάκνημα*,¹ “round, brazen, eight-spoked wheels.”

¹ *Iliad*, v 722.

Also a fourth: ἀσπίδα πάντοσε εἴσην, καλὴν, χαλκείην, ἐξήλατον,¹ "an equally rounded, beautiful, brazen, wrought shield." Who would find fault with him for it? Who would not rather feel grateful to him for this little luxuriancy, seeing the good effect it is capable of producing in suitable passages?

I do not, however, seek the actual justification of either the poet or the painter in the above-mentioned analogy of the two friendly neighbours. A mere analogy is neither a proof nor a justification. But what we must seek to justify them by is this: just as, in the case of the painter, the two separate moments verge so closely upon one another as to allow of their being taken, without hesitation, for a single one, so also in the case of the poet, the several features designating the various parts and properties in space are so short, and follow one another with such rapidity, that we imagine we hear them all simultaneously.

And here, I maintain, the excellence of Homer's language places him at an exceptional advantage. Not only is entire freedom allowed him in the arrangement and number of these qualifying epithets, but he is moreover enabled to arrange them in so felicitous a manner, that the detrimental delay of the noun which they qualify is avoided. In the case of modern languages, these advantages are in part, if not wholly, wanting. In some of them, as, for example, in French, the words, καμπύλα κύκλα, χάλκεα, ὀκτάκνημα must be paraphrased thus: "The round wheels, which were formed of brass and had eight spokes;" the sense would be preserved, but the picture destroyed. Yet here the picture is everything, and the sense nothing; and the most effective poet, by retaining

¹ *Iliad*, xii. 294.

the latter without the former, would sink into a tedious twaddler. This fate has often befallen Homer at the hands of that conscientious writer, Madame Dacier. Our German tongue, on the other hand, can, indeed, in most cases replace the Homeric epithets by others equally short; but it is unable to imitate the advantageous manner in which the Greek language can arrange them. We say, it is true, "the round, brazen, eight-spoked" (*die runden, ehernen, achtspeichigten*), but the word "wheels" (*Räder*) is tacked on at the end. Any one will feel that three separate predicates, preceding any mention of the subject, cannot but give a weak and confused picture. The Greek at once links the subject to the first predicate and lets the others follow; he says, "round wheels, brazen, eight-spoked." We thus know at once what he is speaking of, and are introduced first to the object itself and afterwards to its properties, in accordance with the natural order of thought. This advantage is lacking in our language. Or shall I say, it does exist, but can rarely be employed without giving rise to ambiguity? It comes to the same thing. For, if we subjoin the epithets to the subject, the former must stand *in statu absoluto*; we must say, "round wheels, brazen and eight-spoked." But in this *statu* our adjectives do not differ from adverbs, and, if applied as such to the next verb that stands as predicate to the subject, they must often mar the sense, and in any case render the meaning very obscure.

But I am pausing over trifles, and may seem to have forgotten the shield of Achilles, that famous picture, in respect of which especially Homer was, in ancient times, looked upon as a master of painting.¹ Now a shield, at

¹ Dionysius Halicarnass., in *Vita Homeri apud Th. Gale in Opusc. Mythol.*, p. 401.

any rate, it will be said, is a single material object, and consequently a description of it, according to its parts in juxtaposition, would not form a suitable subject for poetic representation. And yet this very shield has been described by Homer, in over a hundred magnificent lines, with such minuteness and exactitude, as regards its material, its form, and all the figures which filled its vast surface, that modern artists have experienced little difficulty in producing a drawing corresponding with it in every detail.

My reply to this particular objection is, that I have already replied to it. What Homer does is not to describe the shield as it is when finished and complete, but as it is being wrought. Here again, therefore, he has availed himself of that admirable device of transforming what, in his subject, is coexistent into what is consecutive, thus giving us a vivid picture of an action instead of a tedious painting of a material object. We do not see the shield, but the divine craftsman in the act of making it. He steps, with hammer and tongs, before his anvil, and, after the plates have been forged out of the raw material, the figures destined by him to adorn the shield rise from the bronze one by one before our eyes, beneath the finer strokes of his hammer. We do not lose sight of him until the work is completed. At length it is finished, and we marvel at it with the confident astonishment of an eye-witness who has beheld the actual operation.

The same cannot be said of Virgil's description of the shield of Æneas. Either the Roman poet must have failed to grasp the refinement of his model, or else the objects which he wished to introduce upon his shield did not appear to him to be of such a kind as to admit of

their being executed before our eyes. They were prophecies; and it would certainly have been strange if the god had uttered them in our presence with the same distinctness with which the poet afterwards explains them. Prophecies, as such, require a darker language, in which the real names of future persons, to whom they refer, are out of place; yet these real names were apparently of the highest importance to the courtier-poet. But even if the course which he adopts is on this account justifiable, yet the bad effect resulting from his deviation from the method of Homer is none the less apparent. Readers of refined taste will admit that I am right. The preparations made by Vulcan for his work are more or less the same in Virgil as in Homer. But whereas, in Homer, we see not only the preparations for the work, but the actual labour itself, Virgil, after giving us a general view of the god employed with his Cyclopes,¹ suddenly lets the curtain drop, and transports us to an entirely different scene, whence he leads us by degrees into the valley, where Venus comes to meet Æneas with the arms which have meanwhile been completed. She places them against the trunk of an oak; and after the hero has sufficiently gazed at, and admired, and handled, and tried them, the description or picture of the shield commences, which—with its everlasting “Here is” and “Yonder is,” “Next there is” and “Not far off you behold”—grows so cold and wearisome, that it required all the poetical adornment that a Virgil could give to it to prevent it from becoming absolutely intolerable. Since, moreover, this picture is not given us by Æneas, being, as he is, amused by the mere figures and knowing nothing of their significance;² nor by Venus, although she must

¹ *Æneid*, viii. 447-453.

² *Ibid.*, viii. 730.

presumably have known just as much of the future destinies of her beloved progeny as did her happy consort; but since the description comes from the poet's own lips, it is manifest that the action of the poem must meanwhile remain suspended. Not one of his characters takes part in it; and if, instead of this, anything else were represented on the shield, it would make no difference to the sequel of the story. Everywhere we see the clever courtier, embellishing his subject with all kinds of flattering allusions, but not the great genius, which relies entirely upon the intrinsic merit of its work and scorns to use any external means of awakening our interest. The shield of Æneas is consequently an absolute interpolation, inserted for the sole purpose of flattering the Roman national pride; it is a solitary brook, which the poet turns from its course into his main stream, in order to make the latter a little more stirring. The shield of Achilles, on the contrary, is the growth of its own fruitful soil; for a shield had to be made, and since nothing that is necessary comes from the hand of a deity without grace also, it was provided with ornaments. But the skill lay in treating these ornaments merely as such, in interweaving them with the main subject so as to show them to us only in so far as they were connected with it; and this could be accomplished by no other method but that which Homer has adopted. He makes Vulcan fashion these ornaments, because he has to make, and while he is making, a shield worthy of him. In Virgil's account, on the other hand, he seems to make the shield for the sake of the ornaments, since the latter are deemed of sufficient importance to merit a special description long after the shield has been finished.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE objections raised against the shield of Homer by the elder Scaliger, Perrault, Terrasson, and others, are well known, as are also the replies made to them by Dacier, Boivin, and Pope. I am of opinion, however, that the latter sometimes go a little too far, and, confident in the goodness of their cause, make assertions which are as incorrect as they are ineffective in their defence of the poet.

To meet the principal objection—viz., that Homer has filled the shield with a larger number of figures than could possibly be contained within its circumference, Boivin undertook to have a drawing made of it, conforming to the required measurement. His idea of the various concentric circles is a very ingenious one, though not in the least supported by the words of the poet; nor have we any evidence that the ancients divided their shields into sections in this manner. Homer himself calls it *σάκος πάντοσε δεδαιδαλμένον*, “a shield skilfully wrought on all sides;” and, in view of this, I should be inclined to make use of the concave side as well, so as to obtain a larger surface; for that the ancient artists did not leave this side of the shield unornamented, is proved by the shield of Minerva by Phidias.¹ Boivin was not content with merely neglecting

¹ Plinius, xxxvi. 4. 4.

to avail himself of this advantage, but he moreover needlessly increased in number the designs themselves, for which he had to find room in a space already diminished by one half, by dividing into two or three separate pictures what the poet had evidently intended for a single one. I know very well what induced him to do this; but it should not have done so; and, instead of attempting to satisfy the requirements of his opponents, he should have shown them that their demands were unreasonable.

I will make my meaning clearer by an example. When Homer says of a town:

Λαοὶ δ' εἰν ἀγορῇ ἔσαν ἀθρόοι· ἐνθα δὲ νεῖκος
 ὦρ' ὦρει· δύο δ' ἄνδρες ἐνείκεον εἵνεκα ποινῆς
 ἄνδρ' ἀποφθιμένον· ὁ μὲν εὖχετο πάντ' ἀποδοῦναι,
 Δήμῳ πιφαύσκων· ὁ δ' ἀναίνετο μηδὲν ἐλέσθαι.
 Ἀμφω δ' ἰέσθην ἐπὶ ἱστορίῳ πείραρ ἐλέσθαι.
 Λαοὶ δ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἐπήπυνον, ἀμφὶς ἀρωγὰι.
 Κήρυκες δ' ἄρα λαὸν ἐρήτυον· οἱ δὲ γέροντες
 Εἶατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις, ἱερῶ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ·
 Σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἡεροφώνων.
 Τοῖσιν ἔπειτ' ἦισσον, ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δίκασον.
 Κεῖτο δ' ἄρ' ἐν μέσσοισι δύω χρυσοῖο τάλαντα,¹

he does not, I think, intend to give us more than one picture—viz., that of a public trial about the contested payment of a heavy fine for a manslaughter that has been committed. An artist, who has to execute this design, cannot avail himself of more than one moment of it at a time: either the moment of the accusation, or that of the examination of witnesses, or of the delivery of the verdict, or any other moment before, after, or between these points, which he may deem the most

¹ *Iliad*, xviii. 497.

suitable. This moment he endeavours to render as pregnant as possible by employing all the illusion, in which art excels poetry in the representation of visible objects. But the poet, who has to paint this design with words, here falls far short of the artist; and if his work is not to result in an entire failure, what can he do but avail himself likewise of his own peculiar advantages? And what are these advantages? The power of including in his description that which precedes the single moment seized by the artist, as well as that which follows it, and of thus showing us not only what the artist shows us, but also that which the latter leaves to our conjecture. It is this power alone which enables the poet to compete with the artist; and the resemblance between their respective works is greatest when they both produce an equally vivid effect; not when the one imparts to the mind by means of the ear neither more nor less than the other presents to the eye. This principle should have guided Boivin in judging of the passage in Homer, and he would not, in that case, have divided it into as many separate pictures as he thought he perceived distinct periods of time in it. The whole of Homer's description could not well be combined, it is true, in a single picture; the accusation and the defence, the calling of witnesses and the clamours of the divided populace, the endeavours of the heralds to quiet the tumult, and the decision of the judges, are things which follow one another, and cannot exist side by side. Yet what the picture does not contain *actu*, to use the scholastic expression, it contains *virtute*; and the only true way to imitate a material picture by means of words is by combining what is virtually implied in it with that which is actually visible, and not confining oneself to the limits

of art, within which the poet can, indeed, enumerate the data for a picture, but can never produce a picture itself.

In the same manner, Boivin divides the picture of the beleaguered town¹ into three separate ones. He might with equal reason have divided it into a dozen. For, since he failed to grasp the spirit of the poet, and required him to submit to the unities of material painting, he might have found so many transgressions of these unities, that a separate compartment upon the shield would almost have been needed for each individual trait given by the poet. My own opinion is that Homer designed, at the most, ten different pictures for his shield, each of which he introduces with *ἐν μὲν ἔτευξε*, or *ἐν δὲ ποίησε*, or *ἐν δ' ἐτίθει* or *ἐν δὲ ποίκιλλε* *Ἀμφιγυήεις*.² Where there are no such introductory words we have no reason for assuming that a fresh picture is described; on the contrary, all that they include must be treated as a single picture, wanting only that arbitrary concentration in a single point of time, which, as a poet, he was nowise compelled to observe. Had he, on the other hand, complied by adhering closely to it; had he avoided introducing the smallest feature which could not have been combined with it in a

¹ *Iliad*, xviii. 509-540.

² The first picture begins at v. 483, and ends at v. 489; the second, verses 490-509; the third, verses 510-540; the fourth, verses 541-549; the fifth, verses 550-560; the sixth, verses 561-572; the seventh, verses 573-586; the eighth, verses 587-589; the ninth, verses 590-605; and the tenth, verses 606-608. The third picture is the only one without the introductory words above mentioned; but from the words at the commencement of the second—*ἐν δὲ δύω ποίησε πόλεις*—and from the circumstances of the case itself, it is perfectly clear that it must be a separate picture.

material picture; had he, in a word, dealt with it in the way demanded by his critics; then these gentlemen would, it is true, have found no occasion to censure him, nor, it must be added, would any man of taste have admired him.

Pope not only approved of Boivin's plan of drawing the shield, but he even thought that he had made a great discovery when he argued that each of these subdivided pictures might be represented in strict conformity with the rules of painting in vogue at the present day. Contrast, perspective, the three unities, he found, were all strictly observed in them. Now he was well aware that, according to good and reliable evidence, the art of painting was in its infancy at the time of the Trojan war. From his argument it would therefore appear that either Homer must, by virtue of his divine genius, have not so much accomplished what painting could do at that time or in his own day, as divined what it was capable of effecting absolutely; or else the evidence itself cannot be so trustworthy as to outweigh the palpable testimony of the skilfully wrought shield. Those who will may adopt the former hypothesis; the latter, at any rate, will commend itself to no one who knows anything of the history of art beyond the mere data of the historians. For the belief that in Homer's time painting was as yet in its infancy, is not only borne out by the statements of Pliny and other writers, but rests upon the ample proof afforded by the works of art enumerated by the ancients, that for many centuries afterwards art made but little progress, and that the paintings of a Polygnotus, to cite an instance, would be quite unable to sustain the test which Pope believed the pictures of the Homeric shield to be capable of undergoing. The two large paintings by this

artist at Delphi, a detailed description of which is furnished us by Pausanias,¹ were manifestly devoid of all perspective. The ancients cannot be said to have possessed a knowledge of this branch of art; and the evidence brought forward by Pope to prove that Homer was already acquainted with it, only points to the conclusion that he himself must have had a very imperfect idea of it. "That Homer," he says, "was not a stranger to aerial *perspective*, appears in his expressly marking the distance of object from object: he tells us, for instance, that the two spies lay a little remote from the other figures; and that the oak, under which was spread the banquet of the reapers, stood *apart*; what he says of the valley sprinkled all over with cottages and flocks appears to be a description of a large country in perspective. And indeed a general argument for this may be drawn from the number of figures on the shield, which could not be all expressed in their full magnitude, and this is therefore a sort of proof that the art of lessening them according to perspective was known at that time."² The mere observance of the optical experience that a distant object appears smaller than a near one, is not of itself sufficient to constitute perspective in a picture. Perspective requires a single point of view, a definite natural horizon; and it is in this that the ancient paintings were deficient. In the pictures of Polygnotus the ground was not horizon-

¹ *Phocic.*, cap. xxv.-xxxi.

² Pope here uses the term "*aerial perspective*" (perspective *aérienne*) in an entirely wrong sense. As a matter of fact, it has nothing whatever to do with the variation of size in proportion to distance, but is merely used to denote the faintness and change of colour arising from the consistency of the air, or medium, through which we see it. Any one who could fall into this error must have been ignorant of the whole matter.

tal, but was raised at the back to such an extent that the figures, which were intended to stand behind seemed to stand over one another. And if this method of placing the figures separately and in groups was universal, as would appear from the ancient bas-reliefs, in which the figures at the back invariably stand higher than those in the foreground and seem to look over them: then the same must naturally be assumed to be employed in Homer's description, and those of his designs which can in this way be combined in one picture must not be needlessly divided. The twofold scene of the peaceful town, through the streets of which a bridal party is joyfully proceeding, while an important lawsuit is being decided in the market-place, will thus not require more than a single picture, and Homer may easily have conceived it as such by picturing the whole town from so high a point of view that the streets and the market-place could be surveyed simultaneously.

I am of opinion that the proper laws of perspective were only discovered accidentally by means of scene-painting; and even when the latter had attained the height of perfection, it cannot have been an easy matter to apply its laws to a single surface. At any rate, the frequent and manifold errors of perspective which are revealed by paintings of a later period among the antiquities of Herculaneum, are such as would to-day be hardly excused in a tyro.¹

But I will spare myself the task of collecting my scattered observations upon a point which I hope to see fully decided in Herr Winckelmann's promised *History of Art*.²

¹ *Betrachtungen über die Malerei*, p. 185.

² Written in the year 1763.

CHAPTER XX.

I WILL now return to my old path, if indeed a Rambler can be said to have any.

What I have said of bodily objects in general applies with still greater force to beautiful bodily objects.

Physical beauty arises from the harmonious effect of various parts, all of which may be surveyed simultaneously. It requires, therefore, that these parts should lie in juxtaposition; and as things whose parts lie in juxtaposition form the special subject of the plastic arts, these arts, and these alone, can imitate physical beauty.

The poet, who is unable to portray beauty otherwise than by displaying its component parts in successive order, therefore avoids all description of physical beauty as such. He feels that these parts, ranged one after the other, cannot possibly produce the same effect as when they are placed side by side; that the concentrating glance which, after their enumeration, we try to cast back upon them, does not give us the impression of a harmonious picture; that the human imagination is incapable of forming a conception of the effect which such and such a mouth, nose, and eyes would together produce, unless it be by recalling a similar combination of these parts either in actual life or in art.

Here again Homer is the model of models. He says: Nireus was beautiful; Achilles still more so; Helen possessed godlike beauty. But he nowhere enters upon a detailed description of these beauties. And yet the whole poem is founded upon the beauty of Helen. How a modern poet would have dilated upon it!

A Constantine Manasses already endeavoured to adorn his cold chronicles with a description of Helen. I must thank him for the attempt; for I really do not know where else I should find so clear an illustration of the folly of attempting a thing from which Homer had so wisely refrained. When I read the description in question,¹ I seem to see some one rolling stones up a mountain, which are to be made at the top into a splendid building, but which all roll down again of themselves on the other side. What impression is left upon us by this throng of words? How, after all, did Helen look? If a thousand persons read this description, will not every one of them form a different idea of her?

Still, it is true, the politic verses of a monk are not poetry. Now hear Ariosto describing his bewitching Alcina.²

“ Her shape is of such perfect symmetry,
As best to feign the industrious painter knows;
With long and knotted tresses; to the eye
Not yellow gold with brighter lustre glows.
Upon her tender cheek the mingled dye
Is scattered, of the lily and the rose.
Like ivory smooth, the forehead gay and round
Fills up the space, and forms a fitting bound.

¹ Constantinus Manasses, *Compend. Chron.*, p. 20, Edit. Venet.

² *Orlando Furioso*, Canto vii., St. 11-15. [Throughout this chapter I have availed myself of Mr. W. S. Rose's admirable translation (Geo. Bell & Sons).—TR.]

Two black and slender arches rise above
Two clear black eyes, say suns of radiant light ;
Which ever softly beam and slowly move ;
Round these appears to sport in frolic flight,
Hence scattering all his shafts, the little Love,
And seems to plunder hearts in open sight.
Thence, through mid visage, does the nose descend,
Where Envy finds not blemish to amend.

As if between two vales, which softly curl,
The mouth with vermeil tint is seen to glow:
Within are strung two rows of orient pearl,
Which her delicious lips shut up or show.
Of force to melt the heart of any churl,
However rude, hence courteous accents flow ;
And here that gentle smile receives its birth
Which opes at will a paradise on earth.

Like milk the bosom, and the neck of snow ;
Round is the neck, and full and large the breast ;
Where, fresh and firm, two ivory apples grow,
Which rise and fall, as, to the margin pressed
By pleasant breeze, the billows come and go.—
Not prying Argus could discern the rest.
Yet might the observing eye of things concealed
Conjecture safely, from the charms revealed.

To all her arms a just proportion bear,
And a white hand is oftentimes descried,
Which narrow is, and someddeal long ; and where
No knot appears, nor vein is signified.
For finish of that stately shape and rare,
A foot, neat, short and round, beneath is spied.
Angelic visions, creatures of the sky,
Concealed beneath no covering veil can lie.”

Milton, in speaking of the Pandemonium, says—

“The work some praise and some the architect.”

The praise of the one, therefore, does not always imply the praise of the other. A work of art may deserve every recognition and yet not redound specially to the credit of the artist. And an artist, on the other hand, may justly demand our admiration, even though his work does not afford us entire satisfaction. Let this be always borne in mind, and it will be found that entirely conflicting judgments may often be reconciled with each other. Take the present case. Dolce, in his *Dialogue on Painting*, makes Aretino refer in exaggerated terms of praise to the above quoted stanzas of Ariosto;¹ I, on the contrary, would point to them as an example of a painting without a picture. We are both in the right. Dolce admires the knowledge of physical beauty displayed by the poet; whilst I merely consider the effect which this knowledge, when expressed in words, is capable of producing upon my imagination. Dolce concludes from this knowledge that good poets are equally good painters; and I, from this effect, that that which a painter can best express by means of lines and colours is least fitted for expression in words. Dolce extols Ariosto's description as being the most perfect image of a beautiful woman; whilst I recommend it to all poets as a most instructive warning not to attempt with still less hope of success what even an Ariosto has needs failed to accomplish. It may be that when Ariosto says—

“Her shape is of such perfect symmetry,
As best to feign the industrious painter knows,”

he gives proof of fully understanding the laws of

¹ *Dialogo della Pittura, intitolato l'Aretino*: Firenze, 1735, p. 178.

proportion, as they have always been studied by the most industrious artist from nature and the antique.¹ It may be that in the mere words—

“Upon her tender cheek the mingled dye
Is scattered, of the lily and the rose,”

he shows himself to be a perfect master of colouring, a very Titian.² It may equally be inferred, from the fact that he only compares Alcina's hair to gold, but does not call it golden, that he did not countenance the use of an actually golden tint.³ Again, in his description of the descending nose—

“Thence, through mid visage, does the nose descend,”

we may even trace the profile of those ancient Grecian noses which were afterwards borrowed from the Greek artists by the Romans.⁴ But of what use is all this learning and observation to us readers, who want to imagine that we see a beautiful woman, and, in so doing, to feel some of those soft emotions of the blood which accompany the actual sight of beauty? Because the poet knows the proportions which govern a beautiful figure, does it follow that we also know them? And even if we did, does he here show us these proportions or assist us in the least in calling them fully and vividly to mind? A forehead, confined within due proportions—

“Fills up the space, and forms a fitting bound;”

a nose with which envy itself can find no fault—

“Where Envy finds not blemish to amend;”

¹ *Dialogo della Pittura, intitolato l' Aretino*, p. 178.

² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

a hand, somewhat long and small in breadth—

“Which narrow is, and somedeal long,” . . .

—what sort of a picture do all these vague phrases give us? They might with some reason be expected from the lips of a drawing-master who is desirous of impressing his pupils with the beauties of an academic model; for a glance at his model will show them the just proportions of the joyous forehead, the fine chiselling of the nose, the narrowness of the delicate hand. But the poet shows me nothing, and I find with vexation that, in spite of every endeavour, I am unable to see anything.

In this point Virgil, who could here imitate Homer merely by doing nothing, has also been fairly successful. Even Dido is, with him, “pulcherrima Dido,” and nothing more. Or, if he enters into any further details about her, he does so by describing her rich attire and magnificent appearance—

“Tandem progreditur . . .
Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo:
Cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum,
Aurea purpuream subnectit fibula vestem.”¹

If on this account one were to apply to him the words used by that ancient artist towards a pupil who had painted a Helen richly adorned, “Since you could not make her beautiful, you have at least made her fine,” Virgil would reply, “That I could not paint her beautiful is not my fault: the fault lies in the limits of my art; be it my praise to have kept within those limits.”

I must not forget here the two songs of Anacreon, in which he enumerates the beauties of his mistress and of his Bathyllus.² The method which he there adopts is a

¹ *Æneid*, iv. 136.

² *Od.*, xxviii., xxix.

safe one. He imagines a painter to be standing before him and makes him work in his presence. Thus, says he, paint me the hair; thus the brow, the eyes, the mouth; thus the neck and bosom; thus the hip and hands. What the artist could only put together part by part, the poet could only direct part by part. It is not his intention that in these oral directions to the painter we should feel and recognise the whole beauty of the beloved object; he himself is aware of the inadequacy of words to express it, and, for that very reason, avails himself of the expression of art, the illusion of which he exalts to such a degree as to make the whole ode appear to be in praise of art, rather than of his mistress. He sees not her picture, but herself, and fancies that she is on the point of opening her mouth to speak. In the description of Bathyllus, again, his praise of the beautiful boy is so closely united with that of the art and the artist, that it may well be doubted in whose especial honour Anacreon composed the ode. He combines the finest portions of various paintings in which the surpassing loveliness of those portions formed the most striking point; thus he borrows the neck from an Adonis, the breast and hands from a Mercury, the thighs from a Pollux, the belly from a Bacchus, until at last he sees his whole Bathyllus in a finished Apollo of the artist. Lucian, in like manner, is unable to give any idea of the beauty of Panthea otherwise than by referring to the finest female statues of the ancient artists.¹ But is not this equivalent to admitting that words alone are here powerless, that poetry falters and eloquence grows dumb, unless art in some measure aids their interpretation?

¹ *Εἰκόνας*, sec. 3, t. ii., p. 461. Edit. Reitz.

CHAPTER XXI.

BUT will not Poetry lose too much, if it is attempted to deprive her of all pictures of physical beauty? Who would attempt this? Because we seek to inspire her with a dislike of a single path, in which she thinks of attaining to such pictures, while searching after the footprints of her sister art and painfully wandering astray, without ever reaching the same goal as she: does it follow that no other path is left open to her, in which she, in her turn, may lead the way and leave art behind?

Here again let us take Homer. This very poet, who so carefully avoided all detailed description of physical beauty, and by whom we are but just informed, in passing, that Helen had white arms¹ and beautiful hair,² yet succeeds in giving us an idea of her beauty which far transcends anything of the kind that art is capable of performing. I would remind you of the passage where Helen enters the assembly of the elders of the Trojan people. The venerable old men see her, and one says to the others:

Οὐ νέμεσις, Τρῶας καὶ ἑϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
Τοιᾷδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν.
Αἰνῶς ἀθανάτησι θεῆς εἰς ὧπα ἔοικεν.³

¹ *Iliad*, iii. 121.

² *Ibid.* 329.

³ *Ibid.* 156.

What could produce a more vivid idea of beauty than making old age confess that it is well worth the war which costs so much blood and so many tears?

What Homer could not describe in its details, he makes us perceive by its effect. Paint for us, ye poets, the delight, the inclination, the love, the rapture, which beauty causes, and you have painted beauty itself! Who can imagine to himself as ugly the beloved object at whose sight Sappho confesses herself deprived of all sense and thought? Who does not believe that he sees the most beautiful, the most perfect form, the instant he sympathises with the feelings which only such a form can arouse? It is not because Ovid shows us the beautiful form of his Lesbia part by part:

“Quos humeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos!

Forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!

Quam castigato planus sub pectore venter!

Quantum et quale latus! Quam juvenile femur!”

but because he does so with that licentious intoxication by which our longings are so easily awakened, that we imagine we behold the sight that delighted his eyes.

Again, another method whereby poetry can emulate art in the description of bodily beauty, consists in transforming beauty into charm. Charm is beauty in motion, and is, for this very reason, less suited to the painter than to the poet. The painter can only leave motion to conjecture; his figures themselves are, in fact, motionless. With him, therefore, charm becomes grimace. But in poetry it remains what it is: a transitory beauty which we would wish to see again and again. It comes and goes; and since we can generally recall a motion more easily and vividly than mere forms and colours,

charm, under the same conditions, must produce a stronger effect upon us than beauty. All the pleasure and emotion which we derive from the description of Alcina consists in charm. Her eyes make an impression upon us, not because they are black and fiery, but because they—

“*Pietosi a riguardar, a mover parchi*”—

glance sweetly around and turn slowly; because Love flutters around them and discharges from them his whole quiver. Her mouth enchants us, not because her vermilion lips enclose two rows of choice pearls, but because here is formed that lovely smile which in itself already opens a paradise upon earth, because from them proceed those gracious words which soften every rude heart. Her bosom charms us less because milk and ivory and apples represent its whiteness and exquisite form, than because we see it gently undulate, like the waves upon the extreme verge of the shore when a playful zephyr is toying with the sea:—

“*Due pome acerbe, e pur d’avorio fatte,
Vengono e van, come onda al primo margo,
Quando piacevole aura il mar combatte.*”

A few such traits as these, compressed into one or two stanzas, would, I am convinced, be far more effective than all the five into which Ariosto has expanded them, while interweaving them with cold features of a lovely form far too learned to affect our feelings.

Anacreon himself preferred to fall into the seeming impropriety of demanding an impossibility from the painter, rather than detract from the charm of the form of his mistress. All the graces, he tells the artist, must

hover around her soft chin and marble neck ! How so ? In the strictest sense this cannot be done in painting. The painter could round off the chin in the most perfect manner ; he could give it the sweetest dimple, *Amoris digitulo impressum* (for the ἄσσω in the passage in question appears to me to refer to a dimple) ; to the neck he might impart the finest carnation ; but beyond this he could not go. The turns of this lovely neck, the play of the muscles, whereby that dimple was brought now more, now less, into prominence : all that constitutes the real charm, lay beyond his power. The poet used every means which his art possessed of making beauty palpable to us, in order that the painter also might aim at the highest expression of it in his. This is a fresh illustration of my preceding observation that, even when speaking of works of art, the poet is not compelled to confine himself in his descriptions within the limits of art.

CHAPTER XXII.

ZEUXIS painted a Helen, and had the courage to write below the picture those famous lines of Homer in which the enraptured elders confess their feelings. Never have painting and poetry been drawn into a more equal contest. The victory remained undecided, and both deserved a crown.

For just as the wise poet showed us the beauty, which he felt himself incapable of portraying according to its component parts, merely in its effect: so the painter, with equal wisdom, showed us that beauty by giving us those parts and nothing else, and deemed it unbefitting for his art to have recourse to any other mode of representation. His painting consisted of the single figure of Helen, represented standing nude. For this was probably the same that he painted for the town of Crotona.¹

Compare this, for the sake of curiosity, with the picture which Caylus sketches for the modern painter from those lines of Homer. "Helen, covered with a white veil, appears in the midst of several old men, among whom Priam may be recognised by the emblems of his regal dignity. The artist must be very careful to cause the

¹ Val. Maximus, lib. iii., cap. 7. Dionysius Halicarnass, *Art. Rhet.*, cap. 12.

triumph of beauty to be felt in the eager glances, and in all the expressions of an amazed admiration upon the faces of these cold old men. The scene is over one of the gates of the town. The background may be lost either in the open sky or against the higher buildings of the town. The former would set off the scene more prominently, but both are equally suitable."

Just imagine this picture to be executed by the greatest master of our time, and compare it with the work of Zeuxis. Which of the two will reveal the real triumph of beauty? The latter, in which I myself feel it, or the former, in which I have to infer it from the grimaces of affected greybeards? *Turpe senilis amor*; an expression of eagerness makes the most venerable face ridiculous; and an old man who betrays youthful desires is, moreover, an object of disgust. This objection does not apply to Homer's elders, for the passion which they feel is but a momentary spark, which their wisdom at once extinguishes; it is merely intended to add to the lustre of Helen, without putting them to shame. They confess their feelings and hasten to add—

'Αλλὰ καὶ ὧς, τοίη περ ἰοῦσ', ἐν νηυσὶ νεέσθω,
Μηδ' ἡμῶν τεκέσσι τ' ὀπίσσω πῆμα λίποιτο.

Without this determination they would have been foolish dotards, which is, in fact, what they appear in the picture of Caylus. And to what, in the latter, are their eager eyes directed? To a masked, veiled figure. Is that Helen? I cannot understand why Caylus should here have let her retain the veil. Homer, it is true, expressly gives her one—

Αὐτίκα δ' ἀργεννήσι καλυψαμένη ὀθόνησιν,
'Ωρμάτ' ἐκ θαλάμοιο, . . .

but this is only for the purpose of passing through the streets; and even if she does not appear to have removed it or thrown it back when the elders displayed their admiration for her, it must not be forgotten that they were not seeing her for the first time. Their confession, therefore, did not necessarily arise from the present momentary view of her, for they had doubtless often experienced before the feelings which they now for the first time acknowledged. With the painting, however, this is not the case. If I see old men in a state of rapture, I naturally expect to see what it is that transports them; and I am extremely surprised if, as mentioned, I see nothing but a masked and veiled figure, at which they are lasciviously staring. What has this figure in common with Helen? Her white veil and, to a certain extent, her well-proportioned outline, as far as outline can be visible beneath drapery. But perhaps the Count did not intend that her face should be covered, and referred to the veil merely as a part of her attire. In that case (his words, "*Hélène couverte d'un voile blanc*," appear to me to be scarcely capable of this interpretation), I find a fresh cause for surprise. He gives the artist the most careful directions respecting the expression in the faces of the old men, but not a word does he say of the beauty of Helen's face. This modest beauty, timidly approaching with a repentant tear glistening in her eye. What? Are our artists so familiar with the highest beauty that they require no reminding of it? Or is expression more than beauty? And are we accustomed in paintings, as on the stage, to let the plainest actress pass for a charming princess if her prince does but make a passionate declaration of love to her?

Of a truth, the picture of Caylus stands in relation to

that of Zeuxis as a pantomime to the most exalted poetry.

It cannot be denied that Homer was far more assiduously studied formerly than he is to-day. And yet we do not find so very many pictures mentioned as having been taken from him by the old artists. They seem only to have made industrious use of the poet's allusions to particular points of beauty; these they painted, and in these points alone, as they well knew, could they really venture to rival the poet. Besides his Helen, Zeuxis had also painted a Penelope; and Apelles' Diana was the Homeric one, attended by her nymphs. [I may here observe that the passage in Pliny, in which allusion is made to this latter, requires emendation¹] But it does not seem to have been to the taste of the ancient artists to paint actions taken from Homer simply because they provided a rich composition, advantageous contrasts, and artistic effects of light; nor could it be, so

¹ Pliny says of Apelles (lib. xxxv., section 36, 17): "Fecit et Dianam sacrificantium virginum choro mixtam; quibus vicisse Homeri versus videtur id ipsum describentis." Nothing can be more true than this praise. A beautiful goddess, surrounded by beautiful nymphs, and taller than they by the whole of her majestic forehead, is indeed a fitter subject for painting than for poetry. The word *sacrificantium* is, however, in my opinion, spurious. What is the goddess doing among sacrificing virgins? Is this the occupation of Diana's companions in Homer? Not at all; they roam with her over hill and through forest; they hunt, play, and dance (*Odyss.* vi. 102). Pliny therefore must have written, not *sacrificantium*, but *venantium*, or some such word; perhaps *sylvæ vagantium*, which phrase would contain about the same number of letters as the word to be amended; *saltantium* would answer most closely to the word *παίζουσαι* which Homer uses. Virgil, moreover, in his imitation of this passage, makes Diana dance with her nymphs (*Æn.* i. 497).

long as art kept within the narrow limits prescribed by its highest end. Instead of this, they nourished themselves on the spirit of the poet; they filled their imagination with his most sublime traits; the fire of his enthusiasm kindled theirs; they saw and felt as he did; and so their works bore the stamp of Homer's, not in the relation of a portrait to its original, but in that of a son to his father; like but different. The likeness often consists in but a single feature; whilst all the others have nothing in common, save that in the one as well as in the other they harmonise with that one resembling feature.

Since, moreover, Homer's masterpieces were older than any masterpieces of art; since he had contemplated nature with the eye of an artist before ever Phidias and Apelles did so: it is not to be wondered at that the artists discovered various observations, of particular value to them, already recorded in Homer, while as yet they had not had time to gather them direct from nature herself. These they eagerly seized upon, with the intention of imitating nature through Homer. Phidias admitted that the lines—¹

*Η, καὶ κυανέησιν ἐπ' ὀφρύσι νεῦσε Κρονίων·

Ἀμβρόσιαι δ' ἄρα χαῖται ἐπερρώσαντο ἄνακτος

Κρατὸς ἀπ' ἀθανάτοιο· μέγαν δ' ἐλέλιξεν Ὀλυμπον,

had served him as a model for his Olympian Zeus, and that it was only by their aid that he had succeeded in producing a godlike countenance, *propemodum ex ipso cælo petitum*. If any one takes this to mean nothing more than that the artist's imagination was fired by the lofty image of the poet, and rendered capable of producing equally lofty representations, he overlooks, it seems to me, the most essential point and contents himself with

¹ *Iliad*, i. 528. Valerius Maximus, lib. iii., cap. vii., sect. 4

a mere general conclusion, where a particular one could be drawn on far more satisfactory* grounds. In my opinion Phidias here admitted that in this passage he first remarked how much expression lies in the eyebrows, *quanta pars animi*¹ is revealed in them. Perhaps it also induced him to bestow more attention upon the hair, in order to express to some extent what Homer terms ambrosial hair. For it is certain that the ancient artists before Phidias little understood what was eloquent and significant in faces, and had especially neglected the hair. Even Myron, as Pliny observes,² was faulty in both respects; and, according to the same authority, Pythagoras Leontinus was the first who distinguished himself by producing beautiful hair.³ What Phidias learnt from Homer, other artists learnt from the works of Phidias.

I will give yet another example of the same kind, which has always been a favourite one with me. Remember what Hogarth says of the Apollo Belvedere: "These two masterpieces of art, the Apollo and Antinous, are seen together in the same palace at Rome, where the Antinous fills the spectator with admiration only, whilst the Apollo strikes him with surprise, and, as travellers express themselves, with an appearance of something *more than human*; which they *of course* are always at a loss to describe; and this effect, they say, is the more astonishing, as upon examination its disproportion is evident even to a common eye. One of the best sculptors we have in England, who lately went to see them, confirmed to me what has been now said, particularly as to the legs and thighs being too long and too large for

¹ Pliny, lib. x. 51.

² *Ibid.* xxxiv. 19, 3.

³ *Ibid.* xxxiv. 19, 4.

the upper parts. And Andrea Sacchi, one of the great Italian painters, seems to have been of the same opinion, or he would hardly have given his Apollo, crowning Pasquilini the musician, the exact proportion of the Antinous (in a famous picture of his now in England), as otherwise it seems to be a direct copy from the Apollo.

“Although in very great works we often see an inferior part neglected, yet here it cannot be the case, because in a fine statue just proportion is one of its essential beauties; therefore it stands to reason that these limbs must have been lengthened on purpose, otherwise it might easily have been avoided.

“So that if we examine the beauties of this figure thoroughly we may reasonably conclude that what has been hitherto thought so unaccountably excellent in its general appearance hath been owing to what hath seemed a *blemish* in a part of it.”¹ All this is very evident; and, I may add, Homer had already felt and shown that an exalted appearance is produced by the mere increase of size in the proportions of the feet and legs. For when Antenor compares the figure of Ulysses with that of Menelaus, Homer makes him say: “When both stood, Menelaus towered above with his broad shoulders; but when both sat, Ulysses was the more imposing.”² As the sitting Ulysses gained dignity which Menelaus lost, it is easy to determine the relation which in both the upper part of the body had to the feet and legs. In Ulysses the proportions of the former were of unusual size; in Menelaus the proportions of the latter.

¹ *Analysis of Beauty*, chap. xi.

² *Iliad*, iii. 210, 211.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SINGLE unbecoming part may destroy the combined effect of many in the direction of beauty. Yet the object will not on this account necessarily become ugly. Even ugliness requires several unbecoming parts, all of which we must be able to overlook at the same view, before we experience sensations the opposite of those which beauty produces.

Consequently ugliness in itself should not form a suitable subject for poetry; and yet Homer has painted extreme ugliness in Thersites and has described it according to its adjacent parts. Why, in the case of ugliness, did he adopt a method from which he so judiciously refrained in that of beauty? Does not a successive enumeration of its component parts diminish the effect of ugliness, just as a similar enumeration of its parts destroys that of beauty?

Undoubtedly it does; but in this very fact lies Homer's justification. For the very reason that ugliness in the poet's description is reduced to a less repulsive appearance of bodily imperfection, and, in point of its effect, ceases, as it were, to be ugliness, the poet is enabled to make use of it; and what he cannot use by itself, he uses as an ingredient to produce and strengthen certain sensations with which, in default of purely agreeable ones, he must entertain us.

These mixed feelings are the ridiculous and the horrible.

Homer makes Thersites ugly in order to make him ridiculous. It is not, however, his ugliness alone that produces this result; for ugliness is an imperfection, and for the purpose of ridicule a contrast of perfections with imperfections is required. This is the explanation of my friend,¹ to which I would add that this contrast must not be too strongly drawn, and that the *opposita*, to continue in the language of the artists, must be of such a kind that they seem to blend into one another. The wise and virtuous Æsop does not become ridiculous because the ugliness of Thersites has been attributed to him. It was the fad of a sottish monk to try to illustrate the Γελοῖον in his instructive fables by means of the deformity in his own person. For a deformed body and a beautiful mind are as oil and vinegar, which, however much they may be shaken together, yet always remain distinct to the taste. They will not admit of a third quality; the body awakens distrust, the soul pleasure, each its own effect. It is only when the deformed body is at the same time weak and sickly, when it hinders the soul in its operations, when it becomes the source of prejudicial judgments concerning it,—only then is it that disgust and pleasure run into each other; but the new effect arising therefrom is not ridicule, but sympathy; and its object, which otherwise we should only have respected, now awakens our interest. The deformed, sickly Pope must have been far more interesting to his friends than the handsome and healthy Wycherly. But while Thersites is not made ridiculous by mere ugliness, he would by no means be so without it. His ugliness, its harmony with his character, the contrast of both with the idea which he holds of his own im-

¹ *Philos. Schriften des Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, vol. ii. p. 23.

portance, the malevolent talkativeness which is derogatory to himself only, all combine to produce this result. The last circumstance is the οὐ φθαρτικόν,¹ which Aristotle considers indispensable to the ridiculous; as my friend considers it also a necessary condition that the contrast should not be of great importance or excite our interest to any degree. For supposing that even Thersites had been made to pay more dearly for his malicious disparagement of Agamemnon, and that, instead of merely receiving a few bloody slashes, he had forfeited his life, we should then no longer be inclined to laugh at him. For this brute of a man is still a man, whose annihilation must always appear a greater evil to us than all his defects and vices. To become convinced of this, one has only to read the account of his end in Quintus Calaber.² Achilles is grieved at having slain Penthesilea; her beauty, bathed in her own life-blood so bravely shed, calls forth the hero's esteem and pity, and these two combine to form love. But in the eyes of the slanderous Thersites this love is a crime, and he declaims against the lust which can lead even the noblest of men to folly. Achilles is enraged, and, without adding a word, deals him such a blow between the cheek and the ear that his teeth, blood, and life issue together from his mouth. It is too horrible! The exasperated and murderous Achilles is now become more hateful to me than the insidious and snarling Thersites; the shouts with which the Greeks applaud this act offend me; I step to the side of Diomedes, who is already drawing his sword to avenge his kinsman on the murderer, for I feel that Thersites was my kinsman also, a human being.

¹ *De Poetica*, cap. v.

² *Paralipomena*, lib. i. 720-778.

But supposing that the instigations of Thersites had led to a mutiny, that the rebellious people had really embarked in their ships and treacherously abandoned their leaders; that these leaders, on the one hand, had fallen into the hands of a revengeful foe, while the fleet with its people, on the other, had been utterly destroyed by a divine decree of punishment, how would the ugliness of Thersites then appear to us? Ugliness, when harmless, may awaken ridicule; when hurtful, it always inspires horror. I cannot illustrate this better than by citing two excellent passages from Shakespeare. Edmund, the bastard son of the Earl of Gloster, in *King Lear*, is no less a villain than Richard, Duke of Gloster, who, by dint of the most hideous crimes, forced his way to the throne, which he ascended under the title of Richard the Third. How is it then that the former excites our dread and horror so much less than the latter? When I hear the bastard say—

“Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true
As honest madam’s issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,
Got ’tween asleep and wake?”¹

¹ *King Lear*, Act I., Sc. 2.

I hear a devil, but I see him in the form of an angel of light. But when I hear the Earl of Gloster say—

“ But I, that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty;
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable,
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;
Why I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity;
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair, well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain——”¹

I hear a devil and see a devil, in a form which the devil alone should have.

¹ *King Richard the Third*, Act I., Sc. 1.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It is thus that the poet makes use of ugliness in form ; in what way is the painter justified in availing himself of it ?

Painting, as an imitative power can express ugliness ; painting, as a fine art, refuses to do so. In the former capacity, it has all visible objects at its command ; in the latter, it confines itself to such as awaken pleasant sensations.

But will not even unpleasant sensations be rendered pleasant in imitation ? Not always. An astute critic has already remarked this with regard to aversion. "The representation," he says, "of fear, sorrow, dismay, pity, etc., can awaken displeasure only in so far as we consider the evil to be real. By calling to mind, therefore, that it is but an artificial illusion, we may change these feelings of displeasure into those of pleasure. Owing to the law of our imagination, however, the adverse feelings of disgust are consequent upon the mere representation in the mind, whether the object itself be considered real or not. What, then, will it avail an offended mind, even if the artificiality of the imitation be ever so apparent ? Its aversion arises, not from the supposition that the evil is real, but from the mere representation of it, and that at all events is real. The feelings of disgust are therefore invariably real, and never imitations." ¹

¹ *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend*, vol. v. p. 102.

The same applies to ugliness of form. This ugliness offends our eyes, runs counter to our taste for order and harmony, and awakens our disgust, regardless of the real existence of the object in which we perceive it. We do not care to see Thersites either in actual life or in a picture; and if the picture should be the less displeasing of the two, this is not because the ugliness of his form ceases, in the imitation, to be ugliness, but because we are able to withdraw our attention from it and to derive pleasure solely from the art of the painter. But even this pleasure will be interrupted by our constantly reflecting upon the bad purpose to which art has here been applied; and such reflections will rarely fail to diminish our appreciation of the artist.

Aristotle gives another reason why objects, which, in nature, we behold with aversion, may afford us pleasure when most faithfully represented—viz., the general inquisitiveness of man.¹ We experience pleasure in learning from the picture what each thing is intended for (τί ἕκαστον), or in concluding therefrom that it represents this thing or that (ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος). But no inference can be drawn from this in favour of ugliness in the imitation. The pleasure, caused by the satisfaction of our curiosity, is momentary, and accidental to the object which awakens it; the displeasure, on the other hand, which accompanies the sight of ugliness, is permanent, and essential to the object which awakens it. How then can the former counterbalance the latter? Still less can the trifling pleasure afforded by observing the similitude, overcome the unpleasant effect of the ugliness. The more I compare an ugly picture with its ugly original,

¹ *De Poetica*, cap. iv.

the more I expose myself to that effect, so that the pleasure derived from the comparison soon vanishes, and nothing remains to me but the unpleasant impression of the double ugliness. Judging from the examples given by Aristotle, it would appear that he himself did not intend mere ugliness of form to be included among those displeasing objects, which are yet capable of giving pleasure when imitated. These examples are wild beasts and corpses. Wild beasts awaken terror, even though they are not ugly; and it is this terror, and not their ugliness, which, by imitation, is resolved into a pleasurable sensation. The same applies to corpses. The keener feelings of compassion and the terrible thoughts of our own annihilation are the things that render a corpse an object of aversion to us in nature; but in imitation the former is blunted by our knowledge that it is but an illusion, and an addition of soothing circumstances may either draw our minds entirely away from the latter or unite itself so closely with it, that what we see appears to us a desirable object, rather than a thing of terror.

Ugliness of form, therefore, is in itself no suitable subject for painting as a fine art, since the sensations which it produces, whilst being unpleasant, do not even belong to that class of unpleasant sensations which are, in imitation, changed into pleasant ones. Still it may be questioned whether in painting, just as in poetry, this ugliness could not be employed as an ingredient for the purpose of strengthening other sensations.

May painting, to attain the ridiculous and horrible, make use of ugly forms?

I will not venture to answer this question directly in the negative. It is indisputable that harmless ugliness

can be rendered ridiculous in painting also, especially if it is accompanied by an affected assumption of charm and beauty. Nor can it be denied that hurtful ugliness excites horror in a picture just as in actual life, and that the horrible and the ridiculous, both of which are in themselves mixed sensations, will, by imitation, acquire a new degree of attractiveness and pleasure.

I must, however, point out that, notwithstanding this, painting does not here occupy precisely the same position as poetry. In poetry, as I have already remarked, ugliness of form loses its repulsive effect almost entirely, owing to its parts being changed from co-existing into successive; and from this point of view it ceases, as it were, to be ugliness, and can therefore the more closely combine with other appearances to produce a new and peculiar effect. In painting, on the other hand, ugliness retains all its force, its effect thus being scarcely weaker than in actual life. Hence it follows that harmless ugliness cannot long remain ridiculous; the unpleasant sensation gains the upper hand, and what was at first ludicrous, ends by becoming simply repulsive. Nor is it otherwise with hurtful ugliness; the horrible disappears by degrees, and deformity is left behind alone and unchangeable.

In view of these considerations Count Caylus was perfectly right in not including the episode of Thersites in his series of Homeric pictures; but does it therefore follow that the same ought to have been omitted by Homer himself? I regret to find that a scholar of otherwise correct and refined taste is of this opinion,¹ but I reserve for another occasion the fuller explanation of my views on this point.

¹ *Klotzi, Epistolæ Homericae*, p. 33.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE second distinction which the above-mentioned critic draws between disgust and other disagreeable passions of the soul, is shown by the aversion which ugliness of form excites in us.

“Other disagreeable passions,” he says,¹ “may often flatter the mind, not only in imitation, but even in actual life, inasmuch as they never arouse unmixed displeasure, but always temper their bitterness with gratification. Our fear is seldom bereft of all hope; terror incites us to exert our utmost strength in order to escape from danger; our wrath is coupled with a desire for vengeance; sorrow recalls grateful memories of former happiness; and pity is ever associated with the tender feelings of love and affection. The mind is free to dwell now upon the pleasing, now upon the repulsive, parts of a passion, and to create for itself a mixture of pleasure and aversion, which is far more attractive to us than even the purest gratification. It requires but little attention to the operations of our own minds to satisfy ourselves by ample proof that this is so; for whence comes it else that to the angry man his anger, and to the sorrowful his sorrow, are dearer than all the cheerful representations with which we think to calm them? But it is very

¹ *Klotzii Epistolæ Homericae*, p. 103.

different in the case of disgust and its allied feelings. The mind can here recognise no marked admixture of pleasure. Dissatisfaction gains the upper hand, and it is therefore impossible to think of any situation, either in actual life or in imitation, in which the mind would not shrink with abhorrence from representations of them."

This is perfectly true; but since the critic himself recognises the existence of other sensations allied to disgust, which can likewise produce nothing but displeasure, what can be more closely allied to it than the perception of ugliness in form? This, too, is in actual life devoid of the slightest admixture of pleasure; and since it is equally incapable of affording any in imitation, it is likewise impossible to conceive any condition of it in which the mind would not shrink from it with aversion.

This aversion, if I have examined my own feelings with sufficient care, is altogether of the nature of disgust. The sensation which is excited by ugliness of form is disgust, only in a lesser degree. This does not, it is true, agree with another remark of the critic, who seems to consider that it is only the less acute of our senses—viz., taste, smell, and touch, that are exposed to disgust; "The two former," he says, "through the undue sweetness, and the latter through the excessive softness of any object which does not afford sufficient resistance to the nerves that touch it. Such objects then become intolerable to the sight also, but only through the association of ideas and our recollection of the aversion which the taste, smell, or touch experiences at them. For, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an object of disgust to the sight." Yet it appears to me that instances of this last might be named. The mark of a burn in the face,

a harelip, a flattened nose with prominent nostrils, an entire absence of eyebrows,—these are defects which do not offend either the smell, the taste, or the touch. Yet it is certain that they produce a sensation which is far more closely allied to disgust than that produced by other bodily deformities, such as a crooked foot or a high shoulder; and the more delicate our temperament, the more we shall experience, at the sight of them, those sensations which precede nausea. These sensations, however, very soon subside, and it is rarely that actual nausea ensues; the reason of this is that, being objects of sight, sight perceives, in them and together with them, a number of realities, the pleasant representations of which weaken and obscure the unpleasant to such a degree that they cannot produce any marked influence upon the body. Our less acute senses, on the other hand—viz., those of taste, smell, and touch, whilst they are influenced by an object of aversion, are unable to observe such realities; consequently the objectionable element alone affects them, and it does so in the highest degree, nor can it be otherwise than accompanied by a far more violent effect upon the body.

Besides, the disgusting stands on the same footing with regard to imitation as the ugly. And, moreover, its unpleasant effect being the more violent, it is still less capable than the latter of becoming in and by itself a subject of either poetry or painting. Only because it is likewise considerably softened by being expressed in words, should I venture to assert that the poet can avail himself of at least a few disgusting traits as an ingredient to produce the same mixed sensations which he so successfully strengthens by the use of ugliness.

The disgusting may serve to increase the ridiculous;

or again, representations of dignity and propriety may be rendered ludicrous by being placed in contrast with it. Numerous instances of this are to be found in Aristophanes. I am here reminded of the weasel which interrupted the virtuous Socrates in the midst of his astronomical contemplations.¹ Unless we suppose that what fell into his open mouth was disgusting, the ludicrous effect is lost. The most comical traits of this kind are to be found in the Hottentot story of Tquassouw and Knonmquaiha, which appeared in the *Connoisseur*, an English weekly periodical abounding in humour, ascribed to Lord Chesterfield. It is well known how dirty the Hottentots are, and that many things, which fill us with disgust and loathing, are by them considered beautiful, becoming, and sacred. A flatly pressed mass of cartilage for a nose, flaccid breasts descending to the navel, the whole body glistening in the sun with an ointment made of goat's fat and soot, the hair dripping with grease, the legs and arms entwined with fresh entrails;—picture this to yourselves as the object of an ardent, venerating, tender love; read the description couched in the noble language of earnestness and admiration, and refrain from laughter if you can.²

With the terrible the disgusting seems capable of being combined more closely still. What we term the horrible is nothing more than the terrible rendered disgusting. Longinus,³ it is true, is dissatisfied with the τῆς ἐκ μὲν ῥινῶν μύξαι ῥέον in Hesiod's picture of Sorrow;⁴ but I

¹ *Nubes*, l. 170.

² *The Connoisseur*, vol. i., No. 21. It is entitled, "A Description of the Beauty of Knonmquaiha."

³ Περὶ "Τψους, τμήμα ἡ, p. 15. Edit. T. Fabri.

⁴ *Scut. Hercul.*, 266.

am inclined to think that this is not merely because it is a disgusting trait, but because it is purely disgusting and nothing more, and does not in any way add to the terrible. For against the long nails projecting beyond the fingers he appears to raise no objection; yet long nails are little less disgusting than a dirty nose; but they are also terrible, for it is they that tear the cheeks till the blood streams from them to the ground. A dirty nose, on the other hand, is merely a dirty nose and nothing more; and my only advice to Sorrow is to keep her mouth shut. Read the description in Sophocles, of the desolate cave of the wretched Philoctetes. None of the necessities and conveniences of life are to be seen there save a trampled bed of dry leaves, a shapeless wooden bowl, and the materials for lighting a fire. These form the entire possessions of the sick and abandoned man. How does the poet complete this dreadful picture of misery? By adding a touch of disgust. "Ha!" cries Neoptolemus, suddenly starting back, "look at these torn rags full of blood and matter drying here!"¹ So too, in Homer, when Hector is dragged along, his face disfigured with blood and dust, and his hair matted—

"Squalentem barbam et concretos sanguine crines,"

(as Virgil expresses it²), he becomes an object of disgust, and, for this very reason, more horrible, more touching. Who can think of the punishment of Maisyas, in Ovid, without a feeling of disgust?³ But will it not also be found that the disgusting is here in its proper place? It makes the terrible appear horrible; and the horrible is not altogether unpleasant, even in actual life, if only our

¹ *Philoct.*, 31-39.

² *Æneid*, lib. ii. 277.

³ *Metamorph.*, vi. 397.

pity is thereby interested ; how much less, then, will it be so in imitation. I need not give any further examples. But this I will add, that there is one form of the horrible to which the poet can hardly attain by any other means than the disgusting. I allude to the horror of starvation. Even in common life we can only describe the extremity of hunger by an enumeration of all the innutritious, unwholesome, and, above all, disgusting things which the stomach has been forced to receive. Now, as imitation fails to excite in us any actual sensation of hunger, it has recourse to another unpleasant feeling, which, in the case of extreme starvation, we regard as the lesser evil. This feeling it seeks to awaken in us, that we may infer, from our aversion to it, how strong must be that other aversion under the influence of which we would gladly disregard the present one. Ovid, speaking of the Oread, whom Ceres sent to meet Famine, says :

“ Hanc (Famem) procul ut vidit . . .
 refert mandata deæ ; paulumque morata,
 Quamquam aberat longe, quamquam modo venerat illuc,
 Visa tamen sensisse famem. . . .”¹

This is an unnatural exaggeration. The sight of a starving person, or even of Famine herself, does not possess this infectious power ; it may arouse feelings of pity and horror and disgust, but not of hunger. Ovid has not been sparing of this horror in his picture of Fames ; and in his description of the hunger of Erysichthon, as also in that of Callimachus,² the disgusting traits are the strongest. After Erysichthon has devoured everything, not sparing even the sacrificial cow which his mother had reared for Vesta, Callimachus represents him as falling upon horses

¹ *Metamorph*, viii. 809.

² *Hym. in Cererem.*, III.

and cats and begging in the streets for the crumbs and dirty fragments from the tables of strangers. And Ovid makes him at last fix his teeth in his limbs, that from his own body he might obtain sustenance for itself. The only reason why ugly harpies were represented as being so noisome and disgusting was that the hunger caused by their carrying off the food might appear the more horrible. Hear Phineus complaining, in Apollonius—

Τυτθὸν δ' ἦν ἄρα δὴ ποτ' ἐδητύος ἄμμι λίπωσι,
 Πνεῖ τόδ' ἐ μυδαλέον τε καὶ οὐ τλητὸν μένος ὁδμῆς.
 Οὐ κέ τις οὐδὲ μίνυνθα βρότων ἄνσχοιτο πελάσσας,
 Οὐδ' εἰ οἱ ἀδάμαντος ἐληλαμένον κέαρ εἴη,
 Ἄλλὰ με πικρὴ δῆτά κε δαιτὸς ἐπίσχει ἀνάγκη
 Μίμνειν, καὶ μίμνοντα κακῇ ἐν γαστέρι θέσθαι.¹

From this point of view I should like to justify the disgusting introduction of the harpies in Virgil; but instead of occasioning an actual and present famine, they merely foretell an impending one; moreover, the whole prophecy finally resolves itself into a mere verbal equivocation. Dante, again, not only prepares us for the story of Ugolino's starvation, by placing him and his former persecutor in the most loathsome and horrible situation in hell; but also the starvation itself is not without some element of disgust, which especially forces itself upon us when the sons offer themselves to their father as food. I must also refer to a passage in one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, which might have served instead of all other examples, were it not that I feel bound to acknowledge that it is somewhat overdrawn.²

I now come to disgusting objects in painting. Even

¹ *Argonaut.*, lib. ii. 228.

² *The Sea-Voyage*, Act III., Sc. i. [This play is attributed to Fletcher only.—TR.]

were it altogether indisputable that there is really no such thing as an object disgusting to the sight, which, as a matter of course, painting as a fine art would renounce, it would yet be compelled to avoid disgusting objects altogether, because the association of ideas renders them disgusting to the sight also. Pordenone, in a painting of the Burial of Christ, represents one of the bystanders compressing his nose. Richardson¹ disapproves of this on the grounds that Christ had not been dead for a sufficient length of time for his body to become corrupted. In depicting the raising of Lazarus, on the other hand, the painter would, he thinks, be justified in representing some of the bystanders in this attitude, because history distinctly tells us that his body already stank. But in this case, also, such a representation is, to my mind, intolerable; for it is not only the actual stench, but the very thought of it that awakens disgust. We avoid ill-smelling places even if we have a cold in the head. But, it will be urged, painting makes use of the disgusting, not for its own sake, but, as in the case of poetry, in order to strengthen thereby the ludicrous and the terrible. At its peril! But what I have remarked with regard to the ugly in this respect, applies with all the more force to the disgusting. It loses incomparably less of its effect in an imitation which appeals to the eye than in one which appeals to the ear; in the former, therefore, it cannot be blended so easily with the constituent parts of the ridiculous and the terrible as in the latter; as soon as our surprise is over and our first eager glance satisfied, it again disunites itself entirely, and resumes its original crude form.

¹ *De la Peinture*, t. i. p. 74.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HERR WINCKELMANN'S *History of Ancient Art* has appeared. I cannot venture a step further without having read it. If we subtilise upon art merely from general ideas, we may end by acquiring false notions which sooner or later we find, to our shame, refuted by the works of art. The Ancients also were well aware of the ties which bind together painting and poetry, and it will be found that they have never drawn them more closely than was advantageous to either. From what their artists did, I learn what artists generally should do; and where such a man as Winckelmann carries forward the torch of history, speculation may boldly follow.

People generally dip into an important work before commencing to read it in earnest. I was curious to ascertain, above all things, the author's opinion of the Laocoon; not in so far as the artistic value of the work is concerned (for with this subject he has already dealt elsewhere), but merely as regards its antiquity. On whose side do I find him? On the side of those to whom Virgil appears to have had the group before his eyes? or of those who consider that the artist copied the poet?

I am gratified to find that he does not mention a word of either having imitated the other. Is there any absolute necessity for supposing it? It is, after all, quite possible that the points of resemblance, which I have pointed out

above in comparing the poetical description with the work of art, are the result of accident, and not of design; and that, so far from the one having served as a model for the other, there is no need even to assume that both were executed after the same. Had he, however, thought that he perceived any signs of such imitation, he would perforce have declared himself in favour of the former supposition. For he is of opinion that the Laocoon dates from the time when art among the Greeks had reached the zenith of its perfection, that is, from the time of Alexander the Great.

"The kind fate," he says,¹ "which still continued to watch over the arts, even at their destruction, has preserved, for the admiration of the whole world, a work of this period of art as a proof of the reality of that excellence which is ascribed by history to so many masterpieces no longer in existence. Laocoon, together with his two sons, the work of Agesander, Apollodorus,² and Athenodorus, of Rhodes, in all probability dates from that period, although it is impossible to determine its exact age or to name, as some have done, the Olympiad in which these two artists flourished."

In a note he adds: "Pliny makes no mention of the time at which Agesander and his co-workers lived; but Maffei, in his explanation of ancient statues, pretends to know that these artists flourished in the eighty-eighth

¹ *Geschichte der Kunst*, p. 347.

² Not Apollodorus, but Polydorus. Pliny is the only writer who mentions these artists, and, as far as I am aware, this name does not vary in the manuscripts. Were it otherwise, Hardouin would surely have called attention to the fact. Besides, the older editions all give Polydorus. This must, therefore, be a trifling *lapsus calami* on the part of Herr Winckelmann.

Olympiad ; and other writers, as, for example, Richardson, have copied this assertion. Maffei has, I think, taken Athenodorus, a pupil of Polycletus, for one of the artists of the Laocoon, and, as Polycletus flourished during the eighty-seventh Olympiad, he has placed his supposed pupil an Olympiad later ; he can have no other grounds."

He certainly cannot have had any other. But why is Winckelmann satisfied with merely giving this presumed reason of Maffei ? Does it contradict itself ? Not altogether ; for, although it is unsupported by any other evidence, yet it contains in itself a slight measure of probability, unless we are able to prove that Athenodorus, the pupil of Polycletus, and Athenodorus, the co-worker of Agesander and Polydorus, cannot possibly have been one and the same person. Fortunately we are able to prove this from the particulars which have come down to us as to their birthplaces. The first Athenodorus came from Clitor in Arcadia, as is expressly declared by Pausanias ;¹ whilst the second, according to the testimony of Pliny, was a native of Rhodes.

Winckelmann cannot have had any reason for wishing that Maffei's assumption should not be conclusively disproved by the addition of these particulars. On the contrary, the conclusions which his undeniable insight led him to draw from the art displayed in the work, must have appeared to him so convincing that he did not deem it necessary to inquire any further whether Maffei's opinion still retained any ground of probability or not. He doubtless recognised in the Laocoon too many of those *argutiæ*,² which were so characteristic of Lysippus

¹ *Phoc.*, cap. ix., p. 819, Edit. Kuhn.

² Plinius, lib. xxxiv., sec. 19, 6.

and with which he was the first to enrich art, to consider it the production of a preceding age.

But even if it should be proved that the Laocoon cannot have been executed before the time of Lysippus, does it necessarily follow that it must have belonged to about that period, and that it cannot possibly be of much later origin? To pass over the time preceding the establishment of the Roman monarchy, during which art in Greece now rose into eminence, now fell into decay: why, I ask, may not the Laocoon have been the happy fruit of that rivalry to which the artists must have been incited by the lavish magnificence of the early Cæsars? May not Agesander and his associates have been contemporaries of a Strongylion, an Archesilaus, a Pasiteles, a Posidonius, or a Diogenes? Were not some of the works of these masters valued as highly as any that art had ever produced? And supposing that we still possessed perfectly authentic examples of their work, without, however, knowing to what period they belonged, and that we were unable to infer it save from their style of art: would not a divine inspiration be required to guard the critic from assigning them to that epoch which, in the opinion of Winckelmann, was alone worthy of producing the Laocoon?

Pliny, indeed, makes no specific mention of the age in which the artists of the Laocoon lived. But were I called upon to determine, from the connection of the whole passage, as to whether he places them among the earlier or the later artists, I must confess that, to my mind, the probability would rest with the latter, but my readers may judge for themselves.

After dealing at some length with the oldest and greatest masters of sculpture, Phidias, Praxiteles, and

Scopas, and thereupon mentioning, without any regard to chronological order, the names of the others, and especially of those of whose work examples were still preserved in Rome, Pliny goes on to say¹:—“*Nec multo plurium fama est, quorundam claritati in operibus eximiis obstante numero artificum, quoniam nec unus occupat gloriam, nec plures pariter nuncupari possunt, sicut in Laocoonte, qui est in Titi Imperatoris domo, opus omnibus et picturæ et statuariæ artis præponendum. Ex uno lapide eum et liberos draconumque mirabiles nexus de consilii sententia fecere summi artifices, Agesander et Polydorus et Athenodorus Rhodii. Similiter Palatinas domus Cæsarum replevere probatissimis signis Craterus cum Pythodoro, Polydectes cum Hermolao, Pythodorus alius cum Artemone, et singularis Aphrodisius Trallianus Agrippæ Pantheum decoravit Diogenes Atheniensis; et Caryatides in columnis templi ejus probantur inter pauca operum: sicut in fastigio posita signa, sed propter altitudinem loci minus celebrata.*”

Of all the artists mentioned in this passage, Diogenes of Athens is the one whose date is the most conclusively determined. He decorated the Pantheon of Agrippa, and must therefore have lived in the reign of Augustus. Yet if we carefully weigh the words of Pliny, we find, it seems to me, equally decisive evidence as to the dates of Craterus and Pythodorus, of Polydectes and Hermolaus, of the second Pythodorus and Artemon, as well as of Aphrodisius of Tralles. Speaking of these, he says: “*Palatinas domus Cæsarum replevere probatissimis signis.*” Now I ask: Does this simply mean that the palaces of the Cæsars were filled with their masterpieces, or, in other words, that the Cæsars had caused

¹ Lib. xxxvi. 4, 11.

the works to be collected in all parts and transferred to their palaces at Rome? Surely not. On the contrary, they must have been executed expressly for these palaces of the Cæsars; and the artists must have flourished during their time. That they were later artists, whose works were confined to Italy, may also be inferred from the fact that no reference is made to them elsewhere. Had they worked in Greece in early times, Pausanias would have seen one or other of their works and have left us some record thereof. He does, indeed, refer to a Pythodorus;¹ but Hardouin is entirely mistaken in assuming that it is the same whom Pliny mentions in the above-quoted passage. For Pausanias, in speaking of a statue of Juno, the work of the former artist, which he saw at Coronea, in Bœotia, calls it an ἄγαλμα ἀρχαῖον,—a term which he only applies to the works of those masters who had lived in the very earliest and rudest days of art, long before Phidias and Praxiteles. Now the Cæsars would certainly not have decorated their palaces with works of this kind. Still less weight can be attached to Hardouin's other suggestion, that Artemon may perhaps have been the same painter of that name to whom Pliny refers in another passage. The mere identity of names does not by any means afford sufficient evidence to justify our deliberately setting aside the natural interpretation of an authentic passage.

If, then, it is proved beyond a doubt that Craterus, Pythodorus, Polydectes, Hermolaus, and the others, lived under the Cæsars, whose palaces they filled with their masterpieces, it seems to me that to the same age must those artists be assigned whom Pliny connects

¹ *Bœotic.*, cap. xxxiv., p. 778. Edit. Kuhn.

with the first-named by the word *similiter*. And these are the artists of the Laocoon. Now, if Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus belonged to so early an age as that in which Winckelmann places them; just consider how unskilful would be that author who, when forced to pass abruptly from them to the most modern artists, while laying great stress upon accuracy, yet made this transition by means of an "In like manner."

Still, it may be urged that this *similiter* was not used with the intention of connecting the artists in point of time, but in reference to another circumstance, which these artists, so far apart in respect of time, possessed in common. Pliny, it will be said, was speaking of those artists who executed works in conjunction, and, for this reason, remained less known than they deserved to be. For since no one could claim for himself alone the honour of a work executed in common, and to enumerate in every instance the names of all who took part in it would have been too tedious (*quoniam nec unus occupat gloriam, nec plures pariter nuncupari possunt*), their united names became neglected. This was the case with the artists of the Laocoon, and with so many others whom the Cæsars had employed for their palaces.

I will grant this; but even then it is highly probable that Pliny was only referring to later artists who worked in co-operation. For, if he had wished to speak of the older ones also, why did he only mention the artists of the Laocoon? Why not others also? Why not have added the names of Onatas and Calliteles, Timocles and Timarchides, or the sons of this Timarchides? There was a Jupiter, the joint production of these last, in Rome.¹ Winckelmann himself says that a long list

¹ Plinius, xxxvi 4, 10.

might be given of ancient works which had more than one father.¹ And would Pliny have only called to mind the names of Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus if he had not expressly limited himself to the latest times?

If the probability of a supposition increases in proportion to the number and difficulty of the incomprehensible circumstances which are cleared up by its aid, then the assumption that the sculptors of the Laocoon flourished under the early Cæsars becomes in the highest degree probable. For, had they laboured in Greece during the period in which Winckelmann places them; had the Laocoon itself formerly been in that country: then it would greatly surprise us that the Greeks should have maintained absolute silence regarding any such work. Very strange would it be, also, that such great artists should have executed nothing else, or that Pausanias should have seen as little of the rest of their work throughout the whole of Greece as he did of the Laocoon. At Rome, on the other hand, the greatest masterpiece might long remain in obscurity; and, even if we assumed that the Laocoon had already been executed in the time of Augustus, we should not be astonished to learn that Pliny was the first and only person to mention it. Let us only call to mind what he says of a Venus by Scopas,² which stood in a temple of Mars, at Rome: "*quemcunque alium locum nobilitatura. Romæ quidem magnitudo operum eam obliterat, ac magni officiorum negotiorumque acervi omnes a contemplatione talium abducunt: quoniam otiosorum et in magno loci silentio apta admiratio talis est.*"

¹ *Gesch. der Kunst*, Pt. II., p. 331.

² Plinius, xxxvi. 4, 8.

To those of my readers who are inclined to recognise in the group of the Laocoon an imitation of Virgil's description, my preceding remarks will readily commend themselves. A further conjecture has occurred to me, which likewise may not prove unacceptable to them. Perhaps, they may think, it was Asinius Pollio who had Virgil's Laocoon executed by Greek artists. Pollio was an intimate friend of the poet, whom he survived, and appears even to have himself written a work upon the *Æneid*; for where are those detached remarks which Servius quotes from him¹ more likely to have been contained than in a work of his own upon this very poem? Pollio was at the same time an amateur and connoisseur of art; he possessed a rich collection of the finest antiques, and commissioned the artists of his own day to execute new ones for him; and so bold a group as the Laocoon fully harmonised with the taste displayed in his selection.² As, however, in Pliny's time, when the Laocoon stood in the palace of Titus, Pollio's cabinet appears to have been still quite undivided, in a place specially allotted to it, the probability of this conjecture is somewhat diminished. But, after all, may not Titus himself have done what we would ascribe to Pollio?

¹ *Æn.*, lib. ii. 7, and more particularly lib. xi. 183. One might safely venture, therefore, to include such a work in the number of this man's lost writings.

² Plinius, xxxvi. 4, 10.

CHAPTER XXVII.

My belief that the artists of the Laocoon worked under the first Cæsars, or, at all events, did not belong to so early a date as Winckelmann would have us believe, is confirmed by a small piece of information which he himself is the first to disclose. It is this :—¹

“In 1717 the Cardinal Alexander Albani discovered at Nettuno, formerly Antium, in a large vault, which lay sunken in the bed of the sea, the base of a statue, of greyish-black marble, nowadays known as Bigio; this base, in which the statue had been inserted, bore the following inscription :

ΑΘΑΝΟΔΩΡΟΣ ΑΓΗΣΑΝΔΡΟΥ
ΡΟΔΙΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΕ.

‘Athanodorus, the son of Agesander, a native of Rhodes, made it.’ From this inscription we learn that both father and son wrought at the Laocoon; and probably Apollodorus (Polydorus) was also a son of Agesander, for this Athanodorus can be none other than the one mentioned by Pliny. This inscription proves, further, that there were more than three works of art (the number limited by Pliny), on which the artists had inscribed the word *made* (ἐποίησε, *fecit*) in a perfect and definite tense; he tells us that the other artists, from modesty, expressed themselves in an indefinite tense (ἐποiei, *faciebat*).”

Winckelmann will find few to dispute his assertion that the Athanodorus in this inscription can be none other than the Athenodorus whom Pliny mentions

¹ *Gesch. der Kunst*, Pt. ii., p. 347.

amongst the artists of the Laocoon. Athanodorus and Athenodorus are in reality the same name; for the Rhodians spoke the Doric dialect. But upon the inferences which he is inclined to draw from the inscription, I must make a few remarks.

His first conclusion—viz., that Athenodorus was a son of Agesander, may pass. It is highly probable, but not indisputable. For it is well known that there were ancient artists, who, instead of retaining their father's name, preferred to adopt that of their master. What Pliny says of the brothers Apollonius and Tauriscus will hardly admit of any other interpretation.¹

But how? This inscription is to refute the statement of Pliny to the effect that not more than three works of art were to be found to which the artists had affixed their *fecit* in the perfect tense (ἐποίησε instead of ἐποίηει)? Why should we first learn from this inscription what we could have learnt long ago from many others? Was not the statue of Germanicus found to bear the words Κλεομένης ἐποίησε? Likewise the so-called deification of Homer the words Ἀρχέλαος ἐποίησε? And the famous vase at Gaeta, Σαλπίων ἐποίησε? and so forth.

Winckelmann may well say: "Who knows this better than I? But," he will add, "so much the worse for Pliny. For his assertion is thus all the oftener contradicted; its refutation is all the more certain."

But stay. What if Winckelmann makes Pliny say more than he really means; and if the instances above given serve to disprove, not Pliny's assertion, but merely the addition which Winckelmann has made to that assertion? For this is what actually occurs. I must quote

¹ Plinius, xxxvi. 4, 10.

the whole passage. Pliny, in his dedication to Titus, wishes to speak of his work with the modesty of a man who himself knows full well how far it falls short of perfection. He finds a striking example of such modesty among the Greeks, whose boastful and highly promising title-pages he has been criticising briefly; and goes on to say:¹ "*Et ne in totum videar Græcos insectari, ex illis nos velim intelligi pingendi fingendique conditoribus, quos in libellis his invenies, absoluta opera, et illa quoque quæ mirando non satiamur, pendent titulo inscripsisse: ut APELLES FACIEBAT, aut POLYCLETUS; tanquam inchoata semper arte et imperfecta: ut contra judiciorum varietates superesset artifici regressus ad veniam, velut emendaturo quidquid desideraretur, si non esset interceptus. Quare plenum vercundiæ illud est, quod omnia opera tanquam novissima inscribere, et tanquam singulis fato adempti. Tria, non amplius, ut opinor, absolute traduntur inscripta, ILLE FECIT, quæ suis locis reddam: quo apparuit, summam artis securitatem auctori placuisse, et ob id magna invidia fuere omnia ea.*" I wish to call attention to Pliny's expression, "*pingendi fingendique conditoribus.*" He does not say that the custom of acknowledging their works in the imperfect tense was generally observed by all artists and at all times; he distinctly tells us that it was only the earliest masters, those creators of the plastic arts, *pingendi fingendique conditores*, Apelles, Polycletus, and their contemporaries, that possessed this wise modesty; and by the fact of his only mentioning these names, he gives us to understand, indirectly, it is true, by his silence, but none the less clearly, that their successors, especially in later times, expressed greater confidence in themselves.

¹ Plinius, lib. i.

If this is so,—and we are bound to conclude that it is,—then we must allow that the inscription which has been discovered of one of the three artists of the Laocoon may be perfectly correct without in any way impugning the truth of Pliny's assertion that there were probably but three works in existence, in the inscriptions upon which the authors made use of the perfect tense, that is to say, among the older works dating from the times of Apelles, Polycletus, Nicias, and Lysippus. But in that case it cannot be correct, as Winckelmann tries to make out, that Athenodorus and his co-workers were contemporaries of Apelles and Lysippus. The inference to be drawn should rather be the following: If it is true that, among the works of the earlier artists, of Apelles, Polycletus, and the others belonging to the same class, there were but three to be found, in the inscriptions upon which the perfect tense was used; if it is true that Pliny himself has mentioned these three works by name:¹ then it follows that Athenodorus, who was not the author of either of these three works, and who yet used the perfect tense in his inscriptions, did not belong to those ancient artists; he cannot have been a contemporary of Apelles and Lysippus, but must be placed in a later age.

In short, the conclusion that all those artists who used the word *ἐποίησε* must have flourished long after the time of Alexander the Great and shortly before, or during, the reigns of the Cæsars, will, it appears to me, form a very trustworthy criterion. It certainly applies in the case of Cleomenes, and very probably also in that of Archelaus,

¹ At least he expressly promises to do so: “*quæ suis locis reddam.*” If, however, he has not entirely forgotten it, he has only mentioned it in passing, and not in the way one would expect after such a promise.

• whilst, as regards Salpion, the contrary can in no way be proved. The same may be said of others, including Athenodorus.

Let Winckelmann himself act as judge in this question. But I must, at the outset, protest against the converse of my conclusion. If all the artists who used the *ἐποίησε* belong to a later age, it by no means follows that all those who adopted the *ἐποίηει* belong to an earlier one. Among the later artists there may also have been some who really possessed this modesty so becoming to a great man, and others who affected it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WITH the exception of the Laocoon, nothing roused my eagerness more than what Winckelmann might have to say respecting the so-called Borghese gladiator. I believe that with regard to this statue I have made a discovery, upon which I pride myself as much as one can upon such discoveries.

I was afraid that Winckelmann might have anticipated me. I do not, however, find any intimation of it in his work; and if anything could now lessen my confidence in its correctness, it would be the fact that my fears were not realised.

“Some persons,” says Winckelmann,¹ “take this statue to represent a *discobolus*, that is, one who throws the *discus* or a disc made of metal. This was the opinion of the celebrated Von Stosch, which he communicated to me in a letter; but he had not sufficiently considered the position in which a figure of this kind needs to be placed. For a person who is on the point of throwing anything must draw the body backwards; and when the throw is going to take place, the effort is supported upon the right thigh, and the left leg remains idle. But here we have just the reverse. The whole figure is thrown forwards and rests upon the left thigh, and the right leg is stretched backwards to its utmost. The right arm is

¹ *Gesch. der Kunst*, Pt. ii., p. 394.

modern, and a fragment of a lance has been placed in its hand; on the left arm is seen the strap of the shield which he carried. If we consider that the head and eyes are turned upwards, and that the figure appears to be protecting itself with the shield against something which threatens it from above, we might with more reason hold it to be the representation of a warrior who, in a dangerous situation, had signally distinguished himself; for the honour of a statue was, as far as I am aware, never granted by the Greeks to the combatants in public exhibitions, and this work appears to date from an age prior to the introduction of gladiators among the Greeks."

A more just conclusion could not be drawn. This statue is no more a gladiator than a *discobolus*; it really represents a warrior, who in this position distinguished himself in a situation of danger. But since Winckelmann so successfully divined this, how came he to stop short here? How was it that he did not call to mind that warrior who, precisely in this attitude, averted the destruction of an entire army, and to whom his grateful country erected a statue in the identical posture?

In a word: the statue represents Chabrias.

The proof lies in the following passage from Nepos, in the Life of this general¹:—" *Hic quoque in summis habitus est ducibus; resque multas memoria dignas gessit. Sed ex his elucet maxime inventum ejus in prælio, quod apud Thebas fecit quum Bæotiis subsidio venisset. Namque in eo victoriæ fidente summo duce Agesilao, fugatis jam ab eo conductitiis catervis, reliquam phalangem loco vetuit cedere, obnixoque genu scuto, projectaque hasta impetum excipere hostium docuit. Id novum Agesilaus*

¹ Cap. i.

conluens, progredi non est ausus, suosque jam incurrentes tuba revocavit. Hoc usque eo tota Græcia fama celebratum est, ut illo statu Chabrias sibi statuam fieri voluerit, quæ publice ei ab Atheniensibus in foro constituta est. Ex quo factum est, ut postea athletæ, ceterique artifices his statibus in statuâ ponendis uterentur, in quibus victoriam essent adepti."

I know that my readers will pause for an instant ere they acknowledge the correctness of my discovery, but I hope that it will only be for an instant. The attitude of Chabrias does not appear to be precisely the same as that of the Borghese statue. The lance thrown forward, *projecta hasta*, is common to both, but the *obnixo genu scuto* means, according to the commentators, *obnixo in scutum, obfirmato genu ad scutum*: Chabrias showed his soldiers how they should lean with their knees against their shields, and behind them await the attack. The statue, on the contrary, holds the shield aloft. But supposing that the commentators should be mistaken, and that the words *obnixo genu scuto* ought not to be taken together, but divided, by taking *obnixo genu* first and *scuto* by itself or in conjunction with the *projectaque hasta* which follows? The addition of a single comma renders the similitude complete. The statue is that of a soldier, *qui obnixo genu, scuto projectaque hasta impetum hostis excipit*; it represents what Chabrias did, and is the statue of Chabrias. That the comma is really wanting is proved by the *que* following *projecta*, which, if *obnixo genu scuto* belong together, would be superfluous; and, in fact, some editions do omit it on that account.

The great antiquity which must thus be assigned to this statue is entirely borne out by the form of the characters in the artist's inscription upon it; and

Winckelmann has himself concluded therefrom that it is the oldest of the statues now in Rome on which the masters have recorded their names. I leave it to his penetrating glance to determine whether, from the point of view of art, he has discovered anything in it which belies my opinion. Should he honour it with his approval, I shall flatter myself that I have given a better instance of the happy manner in which classical writers may be elucidated by ancient works of art, and the latter, in turn, by the former, than is to be found in the whole of Spence's folio.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN addition to his limitless reading and the extraordinarily extensive knowledge of art which Winckelmann brought to bear upon his work, he has laboured with the noble confidence of the old masters, who directed all their energies towards the main point, and, as for any unimportant details, either dealt with them in a manner implying, as it were, intentional neglect, or left them entirely at the hands of any chance artist.

It is no small merit to have committed only such faults as any one might have avoided. They reveal themselves at a first cursory perusal, and if they are to be noticed at all, it must only be for the purpose of reminding certain persons, who imagine themselves alone to have eyes, that they are not worth noticing.

Already in his treatise upon the imitation of Grecian works of art, Winckelmann has been several times led astray by Junius. Junius is a very misleading author; his whole work is a cento, and while he always uses the words of the ancients, he not infrequently applies passages to painting which, in their original context, have reference to anything rather than that art. When, for instance, Winckelmann wants to show us that, by merely imitating nature, art can no more attain perfection than poetry, and that both poet and painter must choose the impossible which is probable, rather than the

merely possible, he adds, "The possibility and truth which Longinus demands from the painter, in contradistinction to the incredible of which the poet makes use, is perfectly consistent with it." It would have been much better had he omitted this addition, for it manifests a seeming contradiction in the two greatest critics on art, which is absolutely without foundation. It is not true that Longinus ever made a remark to that effect. In writing to his friend Terentian,¹ he says something of the kind respecting eloquence and poetry, but nowise as regards poetry and painting. Now Junius here substitutes painting for eloquence; and it was in him, and not in Longinus, that Winckelmann had read²: "*Præsertim cum poeticæ phantasie finis sit ἑκπληξίς, pictoricæ vero, ἐναργεία, καὶ τὰ μὲν παρὰ τοῖς ποιηταῖς, ut loquitur idem Longinus,*" etc. The words, indeed, of Longinus, but not his meaning!

The same must have happened to him with the following observation: "All actions and attitudes," he says, "of Greek figures which were not stamped with the character of wisdom, but were too unrestrained and wild, constituted a fault which the ancient artists termed *Parenthyrsus*."³ The ancient artists? The only evidence in support of this is Junius. For *parenthyrsus* was a technical term in rhetoric, and was perhaps employed, as the passage in Longinus would seem to indicate, by Theodorus alone.⁴ Nay, more, I even doubt whether this word could be used in speaking of painting at all; for in eloquence and poetry there is a certain pathos

¹ Περὶ Ὑψους, τμήμα ιδ', Edit. T. Fabri, pp. 36-39.

² *De Pictura Vet.*, lib. i., cap. iv., p. 33.

³ *Von der Nachahmung der Griech. Werke*, etc., p. 23.

⁴ Τμήμα β'.

which may be heightened to its extreme without becoming *parenthyrsus*. It is only the highest pathos out of place that is *parenthyrsus*. But in painting, the highest pathos would always be *parenthyrsus* however much it might be justified by the circumstances of the person who expresses it.

It would appear, therefore, that several inaccuracies have crept into the History of Art merely from Winckelmann having in haste consulted Junius, instead of the original sources. When, for instance, he wishes to show, by means of examples, that among the Greeks all that was excellent in any art or craft was highly appreciated, and that the best worker, even in the most trifling matters, might win for himself an immortal name; he quotes the following case, among others:—"We know the name of a constructor of very accurate balances or pairs of scales; it is Parthenius."¹ Winckelmann can only have read the words of Juvenal, to which he here refers, *Lances Parthenio factas*, in the list of Junius. For, had he consulted Juvenal himself, he would not have been misled by the equivocal meaning of the word *lanx*, but would at once have understood, from the context, that the poet was speaking of plates and dishes, not of balances and scales. Juvenal is praising Catullus² because, during a perilous storm at sea, he had acted like the beaver, who mutilates himself to save his life, and had caused his most valuable possessions to be cast overboard, in order to prevent the ship and himself from going down. Juvenal describes these valuables, and says amongst other things:—

¹ *Gesch. der Kunst*, Pt. I., p. 136.

² [*Sat.* xii. 43-47.—TR.]

“ Ille nec argentum dubitabat mittere, lances
 Parthenio factas, urnæ cratera capacem
 Et dignum sitiante Pholo, vel conjuge Fusci.
 Adde et bascaudas et mille escaria, multum
 Cælati, biberet quo callidus emptor Olynthi.”

What can these *lances*, joined, as they are, with goblets and kettles, mean, but plates and dishes? And what does Juvenal wish to convey, unless it be that Catullus cast overboard his entire service of plate, among which were some embossed dishes, the work of Parthenius? *Parthenius*, says the old scholiast, *cælatoris nomen*. But when Grangæus, in his commentary, added the words: *sculptor, de quo Plinius*, he must have done so purely at random, for Pliny mentions no artist of this name.

“Even,” continues Winckelmann, “the name of the saddler, as we should call him, who made the leather shield of Ajax, has been preserved.” But he cannot have ascertained this from the life of Homer by Herodotus, to which he refers his readers. For, while the lines from the *Iliad* are there quoted, in which the poet calls this leather-worker by the name of Tychios, it is expressly added that this name really belonged to a leather-worker of Homer’s acquaintance, and was inserted by the latter as a mark of his friendship and gratitude.¹ This is therefore just the opposite of what Winckelmann would lead us to believe; the name of the saddler, who made the shield of Ajax, was already in Homer’s day so completely forgotten, that the poet was free to substitute for it an entirely new one.

Several other unimportant errors in the work are due merely to slips of the memory, or appertain to subjects which are only introduced cursorily as illustrations.

¹ *Herod. de Vita Homeri*, p. 756. Edit. Wessel.

For instance, it was Hercules, and not Bacchus, of whom Parrhasius boasted that he had appeared to him in a vision in the same form in which he painted him.¹

Tauriscus was not a native of Rhodes, but of Tralles, in Lydia.²

The "Antigone" was not the first tragedy of Sophocles.³

But I must refrain from piling up such trifles on a heap. Captiousness it could not indeed seem; but those who know my high esteem for Herr Winckelmann, might consider it *krokylegmus*.⁴

¹ *Gesch. der Kunst*, Part I., p. 176. Plinius, xxxv. 36. Athenæus, lib. xii. 543.

² *Ibid.*, Part II., p. 353. Plinius, xxxvi. 4, 10.

³ *Ibid.*, Part II., p. 328.

⁴ A useless search for trifles.

DRAMATIC NOTES.

1769.

DRAMATIC NOTES.

ON ACTING.

ALL maxims in a play must come from the fulness of the heart with which the mouth overflows; and they must savour neither of prolonged contemplation nor of boasting.

It therefore stands to reason that all the moral parts must be thoroughly learnt by heart. They must be spoken without hesitation, without the slightest stammer, in an unbroken flow of words, and with such readiness that they may not appear to be due to a laboured feat of the memory, but the direct outcome of actual circumstances.

It likewise follows that no false accentuation must lead us to suspect the actor of chattering about what he does not understand. By a firm and assured tone of voice he must convince us that he is penetrated by the full meaning of his words.

But true accentuation can, if necessary, be imparted even to a parrot. And how far is that actor who only understands a passage removed from one who at the same time is conscious of its full import! Words, the sense of which is once grasped, and which are once impressed upon the memory, may be correctly repeated,

even when the mind is occupied with quite a different matter; but in such a case their true force will be altogether lost upon the speaker. The mind must be entirely concentrated upon the words; its attention must be wholly taken up with them, and then only——

And yet even then the actor may in reality feel very much, and still appear to have no feeling. Feeling is altogether the most disputed among the talents of an actor. It may exist without being recognised, and may be thought to be recognised where it does not exist. For feeling is something internal, of which we can only judge from its external signs. Now it is possible that certain features in the build of the body may either prevent these signs altogether, or at any rate weaken them and render them dubious. An actor may have a certain cast of features, certain gestures, a certain tone of voice, which we are accustomed to associate with passions and sentiments quite different from those which he is to represent and express at the moment. If this be the case, we shall not believe him, however much he may feel; for he is at variance with himself. Another, on the contrary, may be so happily formed, may possess such decisive features, may have all his muscles so readily and quickly at his command, may have power over such delicate and varied inflections of voice; he may, in short, be endowed in so high a degree with all the gifts requisite for dramatic action that he appears to be animated with the most intense feeling when he is playing parts which he does not represent originally, but after some good model, and in which all that he says and does is mechanical imitation and nothing more.

The latter actor is without doubt, in spite of his indifference and coldness, far more serviceable on the

stage than the former. Through merely copying others for a certain length of time, he will at length accumulate a number of little rules, according to which he will himself endeavour to act; and by observing them (on the principle that those modifications of the mind, which bring about certain changes in the body, are in turn influenced by such physical changes) he will attain to some measure of feeling which has not, it is true, the duration and fire of that which arises in the soul, but which, nevertheless, is sufficiently powerful at the time of the representation to cause some of those involuntary changes in the body, the presence of which affords us almost the only certain clue to the real inner feeling. Such an actor is to represent, for example, the highest pitch of fury. I will assume that he does not even properly understand his part, and that he neither comprehends fully the reasons for this anger, nor can imagine them so vividly as to rouse his own mind to anger. Now I say that if he has but learnt to copy the commonest expressions of anger from an actor of original feeling, and to imitate him faithfully—the quickened pace, the stamping of the foot, the rough voice, now harsh and loud, now smothered, the play of the eyebrows, the quivering lip, the gnashing teeth, etc.—if, I say, he only imitates well these things, which can easily be copied if desired, then his mind will inevitably acquire a dim feeling of anger, which, reacting in turn upon his body, will there produce such changes as are not solely dependent upon his will. His face will glow, his eyes flash, his muscles dilate; in short, he will seem to be veritably in anger without actually being so, without in the least comprehending why he should be so.

From these principles of feeling in general I have

endeavoured to determine what external signs accompany those feelings with which moral reflections should be uttered, and which of these signs are under our control and may consequently be represented by any actor, whether he shares the feelings themselves or not. My conclusions are as follows:—

Every moral maxim is a general axiom, and as such demands a certain degree of mental composure and calm reflection. It must therefore be uttered with a certain coldness and tranquillity.

Now such a general axiom is at the same time the result of impressions made upon the acting personages by individual circumstances. It is no mere symbolical conclusion, but a generalised sensation, and should as such be uttered with a certain fire and enthusiasm.

Consequently with enthusiasm and tranquillity, with fire and coldness—?

Precisely; with a compound of both, in which now the one, now the other, predominates, according to the conditions of the situation.

If the situation is a tranquil one, the mind must seek to impart to itself a fresh impulse, so to speak, by means of the moral maxim; it must seem to make general observations on its welfare or its duties, in such a manner that by the aid of these very generalisations it may enjoy the former the more keenly and observe the latter the more readily and bravely.

If, on the other hand, the situation is an exciting one, the mind must, as it were, arrest itself in its flight by means of the moral maxim (by which word I understand every general observation); it must seem to lend to its passions the appearance of reason, and to its stormy ebullitions that of premeditated resolves.

The first-named situation requires a lofty and inspired tone; the second, a modified and solemn one. For in the former reason must fire the emotions, whereas in the latter the emotions must be cooled down by reason.

Most actors exactly reverse this. In exciting situations they bluster out general observations as loudly as the rest of their speeches; and in tranquil ones they recite them as calmly as their other remarks. And this is the reason why moral maxims fail to appear to advantage either in the one case or in the other, and strike us as being either unnatural or else cold and tedious. Such actors can never have reflected that embroidery must contrast with its ground, and that it is wretched taste to embroider gold on gold.

Finally they spoil everything by their gestures. They know neither when nor how to gesticulate. As a rule they make too many and too insignificant gestures. When, in an exciting scene, the mind appears suddenly to collect itself in order to cast a reflective glance upon itself or its surroundings, it is natural that it should command all such movements of the body as depend merely upon its will. Not only does the voice grow softer, but all the limbs assume a position of rest, to express that inner composure without which the eye of reason cannot well look around it. The foot is at once set down with a firm tread, the arms drop, the whole body assumes a symmetrical attitude; a pause—and then the reflection. The man stands there in solemn stillness, as though he were afraid of not catching his own words. The reflection is brought to an end,—another pause,—and then, according to whether the reflection was intended to fire his passions or to moderate them, he either suddenly bursts forth again or sets his

limbs in motion slowly and by degrees. During the reflection his face alone retains traces of agitation; mien and eye are still disturbed and flashing, for these are not controlled so speedily as the hand or foot. Here, therefore, in these expressive looks, this fiery eye, and the composure of the whole of the rest of the body, consists that mixture of fire and coldness with which I am of opinion that moral reflections should be uttered in scenes of passion.

In tranquil scenes they should be uttered with this very same mixture, the only difference being that that part of the action which in the former was fiery is here cold, and that which was there cold is here fiery. When the mind, for instance, is under the influence of gentle sensations only, and seeks, by means of general observations, to impart to these sensations a higher degree of vivacity, it will also bring into play, for this purpose, those limbs which are directly under its control; the hands will be set in full motion; only the facial expression cannot change so quickly, and in mien and eye the quietness will still be visible, whilst the rest of the body has lost every trace of it.

But of what kind are the movements of the hands, with which, in tranquil scenes, moral maxims should be spoken?

We know very little concerning the chironomy of the ancients, that is to say, of the nature of the rules prescribed by them in the use of the hands. We know this, however, that they developed their gestures to a perfection of which the methods of our orators can scarcely enable us to form an idea. Of this whole language of gesture we seem to have retained nothing

but an inarticulate cry, the mere power of gesticulating, without knowing how to impart a definite meaning to our gestures or how to combine them with one another so that they may be capable of conveying, not one idea only, but a connected sense.

I am well aware that among the ancients the pantomimist must not be confounded with the actor. The latter spoke far less with his hands than the former, who used them in the place of speech, whereas the actor employed them merely for the purpose of laying a stress upon his words, and of adding, by way of illustration, an air of truth and vividness to the appointed signs of the voice. With the pantomimist the movements of the hands were not merely natural signs employed by way of illustration; many of them also possessed a conventional meaning, and of these the actor could never avail himself.

He therefore used his hands less often than the pantomimist, but none the less effectively. He did not move his hand unless he could thereby indicate or emphasise something. He knew nothing of those indifferent movements, the continuous, uniform repetition of which tends to lend to so many actors, and especially to women, the appearance of mere marionettes. Now with the right hand, now with the left, they describe in the air the half of a scraggy figure eight, or, with both hands simultaneously, they saw the air; this is what they term action, and whoever can practise it with a certain grace savouring of the dancing-master thinks that we are simply overpowered by it.

I know indeed that even Hogarth advises actors to learn how to move their hands in beautiful undulating lines, but in all directions, and with every possible

variation of which these lines are capable as regards their freedom, length, and duration. And finally he gives them this advice, merely for the purpose of practice, in order that they may thereby acquire suppleness of movement and learn how to bend their arms in a graceful manner, but not in the belief that acting itself consists in nothing more than in always describing such beautiful lines in the same direction.

Away, therefore, with this insignificant *portebras*, especially in reflective scenes! Grace in the wrong place is affectation and grimace; and the same grace too often repeated grows cold and in the end repulsive. I seem to see a schoolboy reciting his lesson, when the actor tenders me his moral reflections with the same movement with which the hand is given in a minuet, or delivers himself of his maxims as though he were drawing them from a spindle.

Every movement made by the hand in reflective passages should be significant. It is often possible to be picturesque, if only the pantomimic is avoided. I may perhaps find another opportunity of illustrating this gradation from significant to picturesque, and from these latter to pantomimic gestures. On this occasion it would lead me too far, and I will content myself with remarking that among the most significant gestures there is one kind which above all others demands the careful attention of the actor, and with which alone he will be enabled to impart life and light to his moral passages. I refer, in short, to the individualising gestures. The moral is a general axiom drawn from the particular circumstances of the acting personages; its generality renders it to a certain extent foreign to the subject, it becomes a digression, and its bearing upon the subject

at issue is unnoticed or not comprehended by the less attentive or less acute spectators. If consequently there are means of bringing its bearing home to them by visualising the symbolical side of the moral, and if such means are to be found in certain gestures, the actor must on no account neglect to make use of them.

If Shakespeare was not as great an actor in actual practice as he was a dramatist, he at all events knew as well what lay within the province of the one art as within that of the other. Yes, perhaps he even pondered the more deeply over the art of the former, because his genius tended the less in that direction. Be this as it may, every word which he makes Hamlet utter, in his advice to the players, should be a golden rule for all actors who set any store upon critical approbation. "Speak the speech, I pray you," he says, amongst other things, to the players, "as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness."

We hear a great deal of the fire of the actor; and it is a matter of common discussion as to whether an actor can show too much of it. If those who affirm this adduce in proof thereof the fact that an actor may frequently display too much animation in the wrong place, or at least more than the circumstances of the situation require, then their opponents are free to maintain that, in such cases, the actor does not display too

much animation, but too little intelligence. It altogether depends, however, upon what we mean by the word "fire." If shrieks and contortions constitute fire, it will hardly be denied that an actor may display too much of it. But if it consists in the rapidity and vivacity with which all those parts that go to make an actor combine to give to his acting the semblance of truth, then we should not desire to see this semblance of truth pushed to the extremes of illusion, if there were any chance of the actor displaying too much fire in this sense of the term. It cannot therefore be this fire that Shakespeare would have us temper in the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of passion. He can only mean that violence of voice and movement; and it is easy to discern the reason why, even in cases where the poet has not observed the least moderation, the actor must yet moderate himself in both points. There are few voices that do not become unpleasant if strained to their utmost; and movements that are too hasty or too violent are seldom dignified. Yet neither our eyes nor our ears should be offended; and it is only by avoiding everything in the expression of violent passion that could prove offensive to either the one or the other, that actors will acquire that smoothness which Hamlet demands of them even at a time when they are to make the deepest impression, and to scare the conscience of hardened sinners out of its sleep.

The art of the actor here stands midway between the plastic arts and poetry. As visible painting, beauty must be its highest law; but as transitory painting, it need not always lend to its postures that calm dignity which gives such an imposing air to the ancient works of art. It may, and must, often partake of the wildness of a

Tempesta, the boldness of a Bernini; and they have in this art all that which is expressive and characteristic of them, without that offensive element which they retain in the plastic arts in virtue of their permanent duration. Only it must not partake of them too long; it must prepare for them gradually by the preceding movements, and by the subsequent ones resolve them once more into the general tone of normal propriety. Nor must it give to them all the force which the poet may use in his treatment. For though the art is silent poetry, it aims at making itself understood by appealing directly to the sight; and every sense must be gratified if it is to convey unfalsified impressions to the mind.

It might easily happen that, by practising that moderation which their art demands of them even in the extremes of passion, our actors should forfeit a certain amount of applause. But what applause? The gods, it is true, are fond of all that is noisy and boisterous, and rarely fail to repay good lungs with loud clapping. The German parterre, too, still shares this taste to a certain extent; and there are actors who are cunning enough to turn this weakness to account. The drowsiest actor will rouse himself towards the end of a scene, when he is about to make his exit, and, by raising his voice, overload the action, without reflecting whether the sense of his speech calls for this increase of exertion. Not seldom it even contradicts the frame of mind in which he is supposed to depart; but what is that to him? He is satisfied with having thus reminded the occupants of the parterre to bestow their attention upon him, and to be so good as to applaud after him. They should hiss after him! But unfortunately they are partly too uncritical, partly too good-natured, and take his will to please them for the deed.

VOLTAIRE AND SHAKESPEARE.

1. *Of Ghosts on the Stage.*

M. DE VOLTAIRE'S tragedy, "Semiramis," was brought out on the French stage in 1748, received great applause, and in a measure formed an epoch in the history of that stage. After M. de Voltaire had produced his "Zaire" and "Alzire," his "Brutus" and "Cæsar," he was confirmed in his opinion that the tragic poets of his nation had in many points surpassed the ancient Greeks. "From us French," he says, "the Greeks might have learnt a more skilful exposition and the great art of combining the scenes one with another in such a way that the stage never remains empty and no personage enters or leaves without a due reason. From us," he continues, "they might have learnt how rivals speak to each other in witty antitheses, and how the poet can dazzle and astonish by a wealth of lofty and brilliant thoughts. From us they might have learnt"—ah yes, what could they not have learnt from the French! Here and there, it is true, a foreigner, who has also studied the ancients a little, might humbly beg to be allowed to differ from them. He might perhaps maintain that all these prerogatives of the French have but little influence upon the essential element of tragedy, and that they are beauties which the simple grandeur of the ancients despised. Yet what is the use of raising any objection against M. de Voltaire? He speaks and the world believes. One thing only did he miss in the French stage: its great masterpieces were not performed with that splendour which the Greeks accorded to their small

attempts in an art as yet in its childhood. He looked with justifiable contempt upon the Paris theatre, an old ball-room decorated in the worst possible style, where the public, standing in a dirty pit, are jostled and crowded together; but what exasperated him most of all was the barbarous custom of allowing the spectators to mount on the stage, whereby the actors had barely sufficient room left for their most important movements. He was convinced that this practice alone had deprived France of much that would without a doubt have been attempted under less hampering conditions and in a more comfortable theatre and one better adapted for action. To prove this contention he wrote his "Semiramis." A queen who assembles her leading subjects, for the purpose of announcing her marriage; a ghost who rises from his grave to hinder incest and wreak vengeance upon his murderer; this grave which a fool enters to reappear as a criminal: all this was indeed something quite new for the French. It created as much noise on the stage, and called forth as much pomp and transformation as an opera alone was in the habit of doing. The poet considered that he had given the model for a special genus; and although he had adapted this model to the French stage such as he wished to see it, and not such as it actually was, yet the play was provisionally performed there as well as circumstances would permit. At the first performance the spectators still sat on the stage; and I, for one, should have enjoyed the sight of an antique ghost appearing in the midst of such a gallant company. It was not until the subsequent performances that this evil practice was abolished. The actors cleared the stage; and what was at the time an exception in favour of an extraordinary

play, resolved itself in course of time into a general custom. This, however, was only the case on the Parisian stage, for which, as we have said, "Semiramis" formed an epoch. In the provinces the old custom is still often adhered to, and the spectators would sacrifice every illusion rather than waive their privilege of treading on the trains of their Zaires and Meropes.

The appearance of a ghost was so daring a novelty in a French tragedy, and the poet who ventured to introduce it justified it by such curious reasons, that it is worth while pausing for a moment to examine them.

"They cry out and write on all sides," says M. de Voltaire, "that we no longer believe in ghosts, and that the apparition of departed spirits cannot seem otherwise than childish in the eyes of an enlightened nation. But stay," he replies to this; "did not the whole of antiquity believe in such miracles, and are we not permitted to take the ancients as our guides? What? Our religion has hallowed the belief in such extraordinary dispensations of providence, and it should be considered ridiculous to revive them?"

These exclamations, it appears to me, are rhetorical rather than well-grounded. Above all things I should prefer to leave aside the question of religion. In matters of taste and criticism, reasons drawn from religion are all very well to reduce an opponent to silence, but they will not always serve to convince him. Religion, as such, has no bearing upon the point at issue; and the testimony of religion, regarded as a form of ancient tradition, has neither more nor less value than any other testimony of antiquity. Consequently we have here to deal with antiquity alone.

The whole of antiquity, it is true, believed in ghosts, and the dramatic poets of the ancients were therefore right in making use of this belief. If one of their number shows us departed spirits upon the stage, it would be unreasonable on our part to find fault therein in virtue of our superior knowledge. Now, does it follow that the modern dramatic poet, who shares our superior knowledge, is justified in adopting the same course? Certainly not. But supposing he places his story in those more credulous times? Not even then. For the dramatic poet is not a historian; he has not to tell us what was once believed to have happened, but to reproduce the event before our very eyes; and he reproduces it, not for the sake of mere historic truth, but with quite a different and a higher purpose. Historic truth is not the end which he has in view, but only the means to that end; his object is to illude us, and to move our hearts by the illusion. If, therefore, it be true that we no longer believe in ghosts; if the absence of such a belief prevent the illusion, as it must needs do; if without this illusion we cannot possibly sympathise: then a dramatic poet, who, in spite of these facts, endeavours to resuscitate such exploded beliefs, only does himself harm; and all the art he has lavished upon them is wasted.

What, then, are we to conclude? That it should never be permissible to bring ghosts and apparitions upon the stage? That this source of terrible and pathetic emotions is exhausted for us? No; this would be too great a loss to poetry. Besides, are there not to be found in poetry examples enough in which genius defies all our philosophy and is able to terrify our imagination with things which in the cold light of reason

seem ludicrous to us? The conclusion must therefore be different, and the hypothesis, whence we started, a false one. We no longer believe in ghosts? Who says so? Or rather, what do we mean by these words? Do we mean that we have in modern times made such progress in knowledge that we are able to disprove the existence of ghosts; that certain incontrovertible truths, which contradict a belief in ghosts, are to-day so universally known, so constantly present to the mind of even the humblest individual, that everything that runs counter to those truths must of necessity appear to him ridiculous and absurd? We do not mean this. When, therefore, we say that we now no longer believe in ghosts, all we wish to convey is this: in this matter, concerning which almost as much may be argued for as against, which is not, and never can be, decided, the prevailing trend of modern thought preponderates on the side of unbelief. Some few hold this opinion from conviction, and many more pretend to hold it; and it is these who raise the outcry and set the fashion. The great majority, on the other hand, are silent and remain indifferent; their opinions incline now to the one side, now to the other; in broad daylight they delight in listening to the jokes which are recounted of ghosts; at night they quake with horror at the tales that are told of them.

Now a disbelief in ghosts in this sense of the term cannot and must not in the least restrain the dramatic poet from making use of them. The seeds of a potential belief in them are sown in all of us, and most of all in those persons for whom he chiefly writes. The one thing needful is that he should possess the art of making these seeds germinate, and a certain dexterity in summoning up with sufficient rapidity and force arguments

in favour of the existence of such ghosts. If he possesses these, then, whatever we may believe in ordinary life, in the theatre we are bound to believe as the poet wills.

Such a poet is Shakespeare; and he stands almost alone. His ghost in "Hamlet" makes our hairs stand on end, whether they cover a believing pate or a sceptical one. M. de Voltaire gained nothing by pointing to this ghost; on the contrary, it only served to make him and his ghost of Ninus ridiculous.

Shakespeare's ghost appears to us actually to come from another world. For it comes at a solemn hour, in the witching stillness of the night, accompanied by all the gloomy and mysterious accessories with which, from the time when nursery tales were recounted to us, we have ever been accustomed to associate the idea of ghosts. But Voltaire's ghost is not even fit for a bugbear to frighten children. It is only a disguised actor, who has nothing, says nothing, and does nothing to make it appear in the least probable that he is that which he pretends to be. All the circumstances, moreover, under which he appears, destroy the illusion and betray the creation of a cold poet, who would fain illude and terrify us, but does not know how to set about it. Just take this one circumstance: preceded by a clap of thunder, Voltaire's ghost steps forth from its grave in broad daylight, in the midst of the assembled parliament. Now, where has Voltaire ever heard that ghosts are so bold? Any old woman could have told him that they avoid the light of the sun and are averse to visiting large assemblies. Voltaire was no doubt also aware of this, but he was too timid, too fastidious, to make use of these vulgar conditions; he wanted to show us a ghost, but

it was to be a superior kind of ghost, and in endeavouring to make it superior he spoilt it altogether. A ghost that takes liberties which are contrary to all precedent, to all the customs attributed to respectable ghosts, does not seem to me a proper kind of ghost; and everything that does not in such a case strengthen the illusion tends to destroy it.

Had Voltaire paid some attention to mimetic action he would have found another reason for the impropriety of letting a ghost appear before a large assembly. All present must, as soon as they behold it, exhibit signs of fear and horror; and each of them must do so in a different way, if the spectacle is not to resemble the cold symmetry of a ballet. Now suppose a troop of block-heads have been trained for this purpose; even if they have been most carefully trained, consider to what an extent these manifold expressions of one and the same emotion must divide the attention of the spectator and divert it from the principal characters. If these latter are to make a due impression upon us, not only must we be able to see them, but it will be better still if we see nothing but them. In the play of Shakespeare, it is Hamlet alone who deals with the ghost; and in the scene where his mother is present she neither sees nor hears it. All our attention is consequently fixed upon him; and the more signs we discover in him of a mind o'erthrown by fear and terror, the more readily do we take the phantom that is the cause of his disorder for that which he supposes it to be. The ghost works upon our feelings through him rather than by itself. The impression which it produces upon him passes on to us, and the effect is too apparent and too vivid for us to doubt its supernatural cause. How little Voltaire understood this stroke of

art ! At his ghost many are frightened, but to a very slight degree. Semiramis exclaims once : " Heaven ! I die ! " while the rest make no more ado about it than we might make about a friend whom we believe to be far away and who suddenly walks into the room.

I must note another point of difference between the ghosts of the English and French poets. Voltaire's ghost is nothing but a poetical machine, merely introduced for the purpose of unravelling the plot; in itself it has not the slightest interest for us. Shakespeare's ghost, on the other hand, is a real acting personage, in whose fate we take an interest; it awakens our horror, but also our pity.

This difference is no doubt due to the different points of view from which the two poets regarded ghosts in general. Voltaire looks upon the apparition of a dead man as a miracle; Shakespeare as a perfectly natural occurrence. Which of the two held the more philosophical view cannot be questioned; but Shakespeare thought the more poetically. Voltaire never regarded his ghost as a being which even beyond the grave is capable of pleasant and unpleasant emotions, and which has therefore a claim upon our pity. All that he wanted to teach us was that the divine power would at times make an exception to its eternal laws in order to bring hidden crimes to light and to punish the guilty.

I will not say that the dramatic poet commits a fault in arranging his fable in such a manner as to make it serve for illustrating or confirming some great moral truth. But I may say that this arrangement of the fable is anything but needful; that there are very instructive and perfect plays which do not aim at any such single

maxim; and that it is wrong to infer from the moral sentences, which form the close of many ancient tragedies, that the entire plays were written merely for the purpose of illustrating those sentences.

If, therefore, M. de Voltaire's "Semiramis" possessed no other merit but this, on which he prides himself so much—namely, that it teaches us to reverence the divine justice that selects extraordinary means to punish extraordinary crimes, then I should consider "Semiramis" a very indifferent play at the best, especially as this moral is by no means the most edifying. For it is indisputably more becoming to assume that Providence has no need to employ these extraordinary means, and that the reward of the good and the punishment of the bad follow in the ordinary chain of events.

2. *French and English Tragedy.*

"To lovers of literary history," says M. de Voltaire, "it will not be displeasing to learn how 'Zaire' originated. Various ladies had reproached the author with not introducing sufficient love-episodes into his tragedies. He replied that, in his opinion, tragedy was hardly the most fitting place for love; still, if they absolutely insisted upon having enamoured heroes, he could supply them with some just as well as any one else. The play was completed in eighteen days, and was received with great acclamation. The Parisians term it a Christian tragedy, and it has often being played in place of 'Polyeucte.'"

To the ladies it is, therefore, that we are indebted for this play, and with them it will long continue to be a favourite. A young and ardent monarch, subjugated by love alone; a proud conqueror vanquished by beauty alone; a Sultan without polygamy; a seraglio transformed into the free and accessible abode of an absolute mistress; a forsaken maiden, whose beautiful eyes, and nothing else, have raised her to the highest pinnacle of fortune; a heart, for which tenderness and religion contend, that is divided between its god and its idol, that would fain be pious if it could do so without ceasing to love; a jealous man, who recognises his error and avenges it upon himself: if these flattering ideas do not win the applause of the fair sex, then what indeed could do so?

Love itself dictated "Zaire" to Voltaire, a critic cleverly remarked. He would have been more correct had he said gallantry. I know of but one tragedy at which love itself has laboured, and that is Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." Voltaire, it is true, makes his enamoured Zaire express her feelings with great elegance and propriety; yet what is such expression compared with that living picture of all the smallest, most secret artifices whereby love steals into our souls, of all the imperceptible advantages which it thereby enjoys, of all the devices which it adopts to conquer every other passion, until it becomes the sole tyrant of all our desires and all our aversions? Voltaire, if I may say so, understands the official language of love very well indeed; that is to say, the language and the tone which love employs when it wishes to express itself in the most cautious and measured manner, when it has nothing to say but what would meet with the approval of the sophistical prude and the cold

critic. Yet even the best official does not always know the most about the secrets of his government; or else, if Voltaire possesses the same deep insight into the essence of love which Shakespeare had, he has at all events given us no signs of it here, and the work has consequently remained far beneath the poet himself.

Much the same might be said with regard to jealousy. His jealous Orosman plays a sorry figure beside the jealous Othello of Shakespeare. And yet the character of Orosman was unquestionably founded upon that of Othello. Cibber says—

“ From English plays, Zara’s French author fir’d,
Confess’d his muse beyond herself inspir’d,
From rack’d Othello’s rage, he rais’d his style
And snatch’d the brand that lights the tragic pile.”

I should have said: a brand from out this flaming pile, and one, moreover, that smoked more than it glowed or warmed. In Orosman we hear a jealous man speak, we see him commit a rash deed of jealousy; but of jealousy itself we learn neither more nor less than we knew before. Othello, on the other hand, affords us the fullest key to this deplorable madness; from him we can learn all that refers to it, how to awaken it and how to avoid it.

But is it always Shakespeare, I hear some of my readers ask, who understood everything better than the French? That annoys us, for we cannot read him. I seize this opportunity to remind the public of what it seems to have designedly forgotten. We have a translation of Shakespeare. It is scarcely finished, and yet it seems to be already forgotten. The critics have spoken very ill of it. I have half a mind to speak very highly of it; not for the purpose of contradicting these learned

individuals, or of defending the faults which they profess to have discovered there; but because I am of opinion that so much ado should never have been made about those faults. The task was a difficult one; and any other person than Herr Wieland would in his haste have made other slips, and through ignorance or laziness have omitted more passages; and the parts which he has done well, probably no one will do better. At any rate his translation of Shakespeare is a book which cannot be sufficiently recommended among us. We shall have enough to learn from the beauties which it contains, before the faults that accompany them offend us so greatly as to render a better translation necessary.

To return to "Zaire." The author brought it out on the Parisian stage in 1733,¹ and three years later it was translated into English and performed in London at Drury Lane. The translator was Aaron Hill, who was himself a dramatist of no mean order. This greatly flattered Voltaire, and what he says of it in his dedication to the Englishman Falkener, written in his peculiar strain of proud humility, deserves to be read. Only everything must not be considered as true as he asserts. Woe to him who does not always read Voltaire's works in the sceptical spirit in which a portion of them are written!

He says, for example, to his English friend, "Your poets had a custom to which even Addison himself submitted; such is the power of habit over reason and law. This unreasonable custom consisted in concluding each act with verses differing in style from the rest of the play; and these verses had to contain a simile. Phædra, in leaving the stage, compared herself in poetical terms to a deer, Cato to a rock, Cleopatra to children crying

¹ It was first performed on the 13th of August 1732.—TR.

themselves to sleep. The translator of 'Zaire' is the first person who has dared to defy this unnatural taste. He has avoided this custom, feeling that passion should speak in the language of truth, and that the poet should always remain out of sight, so that the hero alone may appear."

There are only three untruths in this passage; that is not much for M. de Voltaire. It is true that the English since the time of Shakespeare, and perhaps even before that, had been in the habit of concluding their blank verse acts with a rhymed couplet. But that these couplets only contained comparisons, or that they must necessarily do so, is altogether incorrect; and I am at a loss to understand how M. de Voltaire can have ventured to make such a statement to an Englishman whom he must have supposed to be familiar with the tragic writers of his own country. Secondly, it is not true that Hill departed from this custom in his translation of "Zaire." It is hardly credible that Voltaire should have read the translation of his own play less attentively than a disinterested person like myself. And yet this must be so. For as surely as the play is written in blank verse, so also does each act conclude with one or two couplets. Similes, indeed, they do not contain; but, as mentioned, of all such couplets, with which Shakespeare, Johnson, Dryden, Lee, Otway, Rowe, and the rest bring their acts to a close, there are certainly not more than five that contain a comparison to every hundred that contain none. What, then, was Hill's special merit? Even had he introduced such an innovation as Voltaire attributes to him, it would, in the third place, be untrue that his example had exercised the influence ascribed to it by the latter. To this very day as many, if not more, tragedies appear in England with acts ending in rhymed

couplets than otherwise. And Hill himself, who wrote several plays even after he had translated "Zaire," has not freed himself entirely from the old custom in a single piece. What difference, after all, does it make whether we hear a rhyme at the end or not? If the lines rhyme, they may be of service to the orchestra; the players can tell when they have to prepare themselves. And an indication to this effect may be far more skilfully given in the play itself than by means of a whistle or other signal.

In Hill's day English actors were somewhat unnatural; their tragic acting was especially wild and exaggerated. When they wished to express violent passion they would rant and behave like maniacs; the rest of the time they would drawl in a stiff, stilted, and pompous tone, every syllable of which betrayed the comedian. When, therefore, he made arrangements for the performance of his translation of "Zaire," he entrusted the title-rôle to a young woman who had never before played in a tragedy. He argued as follows: this young woman has feeling, voice, figure, and decorum; she has not yet picked up the false style of the theatre; she does not need to unlearn any faults; and if she can but persuade herself to believe for a few hours that she is that person whom she is supposed to represent, then she may utter the words as they come, and all will go well. All went well, and the theatrical pedants, who maintained, in opposition to Hill, that none but a very experienced and skilful actress could do justice to such a part, were put to silence. This young actress was the wife of a comedian, Colley Cibber, and her first attempt, in her eighteenth year, was in a *chef d'œuvre*. It is curious to note that

the French actress who took the part of Zaire at the first performance was likewise a beginner. By this means the young and charming Mademoiselle Gossin at once achieved popularity, and Voltaire himself was so fascinated by her that he lamented his age very piteously.

The part of Orosman was taken by a relation of Hill, who was not a professional actor, but a man of position. He played for the love of the art, and had no hesitation whatever in appearing in public and displaying a talent that is as estimable as any other. In England such examples of persons of standing playing for amusement are by no means rare. "The only strange thing about this," says M. de Voltaire, "is that it should appear strange to us. We must bear in mind that in this world everything depends upon custom and opinion. The French court in days gone by danced on the stage with opera singers, and nothing more is thought about it except that this form of amusement has gone out of fashion. What is the difference between the two arts but that the one is as far above the other as talents demanding great mental power are above mere bodily agility?"

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It is strange how greatly the German taste differs from the Italian. The Italian finds Voltaire too short; we Germans find him too long. No sooner has Orosman uttered his last words and given himself the death-thrust than down goes our curtain. But is it true that the German taste really demands this? We curtail many plays in this way; but why do we do so? Do we seriously want our tragedies to end like epigrams, always with the point of the dagger or the last sigh of the hero? Whence do we calm, serious Germans get this restless

impatience, that will not suffer us to listen to another word when once the execution is over, however brief, however necessary to the artistic conclusion of the play the remaining portion may be? But I search in vain for the cause of a thing that does not exist. We are sufficiently cool-blooded to listen to the poet until the end, if only the actor would let us. We would gladly hear the last commands of the magnanimous Sultan, and share Nerestan's admiration and pity; but this we are prevented from doing. And why? In answer to this "why" I know of no "because." Are the Orosmans to blame? One can quite understand why they should like to have the last word,—stabbed and applauded. Well, we must pardon small vanities in artists.

In no country has "Zaire" encountered severer criticism than in Holland. Frederick Duim, possibly a relation of the celebrated actor of that name on the Amsterdam stage, found so much to object to in it that he considered it an easy matter to write a better play. And he actually did write—another,¹ in which Zaire's conversion plays the chief part, and which ends by the Sultan conquering his love and sending the Christian Zaire back to her fatherland with all the pomp befitting her contemplated dignity, while old Lusignan dies of joy. Who wants to hear any more of it? The one unpardonable fault which a tragic poet can commit is that of leaving us cold and unmoved; provided that he interests us, he may do as he likes with the little mechanical rules. It is all very well for the Duims to criticise, but they must not attempt to bend the bow of Ulysses themselves. I say this because I should not like to see conclusions drawn from Duim's unsuccessful improvement as to the indefensibility of his

¹ *Zaire, bekeerde Turkinne. Treurspel, Amsterdam, 1745.*

criticisms. His objections are to a large extent well founded; especially true are his remarks as to the impropriety of Voltaire's choice of scene and the unskilful way in which he makes his characters enter and leave the stage without sufficient reason. Nor has he failed to notice the absurdity of the sixth scene in the third act. "Orosman," he says, "comes to fetch Zaire to the mosque; Zaire refuses to go, without giving the slightest reason for so doing, she departs, and Orosman is left standing like a fool. Does this accord with his dignity? Is it compatible with his character? Why does he not insist upon Zaire explaining herself? Why does he not follow her into the seraglio? Was he not allowed to follow her thither?" But, my good Duim, if Zaire had explained herself, whence could the remaining acts have come? Would not the whole tragedy in that case have come to grief? Quite so. The second scene of the third act is equally absurd. Orosman again comes to Zaire; the latter again departs without giving the least reason; and Orosman, good soul, finds consolation in a monologue. But, as I have said, the uncertainty or complication had to continue until the fifth act; and if the whole catastrophe hangs upon a hair, there are many things of greater importance in this world that hang upon nothing stronger.

In other respects the last-mentioned scene is the one in which the actor who plays the part of Orosman can display his highest art in all the modest splendour which none but the greatest connoisseurs can properly appreciate. He must change from one emotion to another, and must be able to effect this silent transition so naturally that he carries the spectator with him, not by a leap, but by a rapid, yet perceptible gradation.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY IN THE DRAMA.

It is permissible for every one to have his own taste, and it is a praiseworthy thing to try to account satisfactorily for the taste which one holds. But to give to the reasons whereby one seeks to justify it a character of universality, and thus make it out to be the only true taste, if those reasons are correct, is to exceed the limits of the investigating amateur, and to set oneself up as an independent lawgiver. . . . The true art critic deduces no rules from his individual taste, but has formed his taste according to the rules demanded by the nature of his subject.

Now Aristotle decided long ago how far the tragic poet is concerned with historical accuracy: only in so far as it resembles a well-constructed fable, with which he can combine his intentions. He makes use of an event, not merely because it happened, but because it happened in such a manner that he could scarcely invent a better one for his present purpose. If an actual event should offer him this advantage, then that actual event will be welcome; but it is not worth his while to search minutely for such a case through the annals of history. And how many persons, after all, know what really has occurred? If we are but prepared to admit the possibility that something may happen from the fact that it has happened, what is there to prevent our regarding a purely fictitious fable as a true historical occurrence, of which we had never heard before? What is the first thing that invests a story with an air of reality? Is it not its inherent probability? And is it not a matter of indifference whether this probability remains unconfirmed by any

testimony or tradition or is only confirmed by such as have never come within our knowledge? A common, but groundless, impression prevails, that it is one of the objects of the stage to preserve the memory of great men; this duty belongs to history and not to the stage. The latter should teach us, not what this or that individual has done, but how every person of a certain character would act under certain given circumstances. The aim of tragedy is far more philosophical than that of history, and if the former is employed as a mere panegyric of famous men, or misused for the purpose of feeding national pride, it is indeed degraded from its true dignity.

ON COMEDY.

. . . AN absent-minded person is said to be no fit subject for comedy.¹ And why not? Absent-mindedness, it is urged, is a malady, a misfortune, but not a vice; and an absent-minded person no more deserves ridicule than one who is afflicted with the headache. Comedy, we are told, must only deal with such faults as can be remedied; but a man who is absent-minded by nature can no more be cured by means of ridicule than one who limps.

But is it true that absent-mindedness is a mental defect against which even our utmost exertions are powerless? Is it to be looked upon as a natural shortcoming rather than as a bad habit? I cannot think so. Are we not masters of our attention? Have we not the power of applying or diverting it at will? And what else is absent-mindedness but a false use of our attention? The absent-minded person thinks, only he does not think

¹ Lessing is referring to Regnard's "Distrain."

that which he should think in accordance with his present sensual impressions. His mind is not slumbering, or torpid, or inactive; it is only absent, otherwise occupied. But just as it can be occupied elsewhere, so too can it be here; it is the mind's natural function to be alive to the sensuous changes of the body. An effort is required in order to disaccustom the mind from this its proper function; surely, then, it must be possible to accustom it again thereto?

Yet even if we grant that absent-mindedness is incurable, what authority have we for supposing that comedy should only laugh at moral defects, at faults which may be cured? Every absurdity, every contrast of reality and deficiency, is laughable. But laughter and derision are far apart. We can laugh at a man, occasionally laugh about him, without in the least deriding him. Indisputable and well known as this distinction is, yet all the quibbles in which Rousseau but recently indulged with regard to the use of comedy were entirely due to the fact that he had failed to grasp its true import. "Molière," he tells us, for example, "makes us laugh at the misanthrope, and yet the latter is the honest man of the play; here, therefore, Molière proves himself an enemy to virtue in that he makes the virtuous man appear contemptible." Not so; the misanthrope does not become contemptible; he remains what he was, and the laughter arising from the situations in which the poet places him does not in the least lower him in our esteem. The same applies in the case of the absent-minded man; we laugh at him, but do we on that account despise him? We recognise his other good qualities as we ought; nay more, were it not for them we should not feel inclined to laugh at his absent-mindedness. Let a bad, worthless

person be endowed with this absent-mindedness, and then see if it still remains laughable. Repulsive, disgusting, ugly, it will be, but not laughable.

Comedy is to do us good through laughter, but not through derision; not just to correct those faults at which it laughs, nor simply and solely those persons who possess these laughable faults. The true general use of comedy consists in laughter itself, in the practice of our powers to discern the ridiculous, to discern it readily and with ease, decked though it be in the cloak of passion or of fashion, in every admixture of good and bad qualities, even in the wrinkles of solemn earnestness. Granted that Molière's Miser never cured a miser, or Regnard's Gambler a gambler; admitted that laughter could never cure these fools; the worse for them, but not for comedy. Comedy, if it cannot cure desperate diseases, is satisfied with fortifying the healthy in their health. The Miser is instructive also to the generous man; and he who never plays may yet be edified by the Gambler. The vices from which they are themselves free may be shared by others with whom they have to live. It is a good thing to know those with whom one is brought in contact, and to preserve oneself from the effects of example. A preservative is also a valuable medicine, and all morality has none more powerful and efficacious than the ridiculous.

THE DRAMATIC UNITIES.

It is one thing to circumvent the rules, another to adhere strictly to them. The former is done by the French; the latter appears to have been understood by the ancients alone.

Unity of action was the first dramatic law of the ancients; the unities of time and place were merely consequences of the former, and would hardly have been observed more strictly than was necessary in order to preserve the unity of action, had it not been for the combination with the chorus. For since their actions required the presence of a large number of persons, and since these latter always remained the same throughout the play and could not be represented as going further from their abodes, or continuing absent from them for a longer time than it is customary to do from mere curiosity: the ancients could scarcely do otherwise than limit the place to one and the same spot, and the time to one and the same day. To this limitation, therefore, they adhered *bonâ fide*; at the same time, they were sufficiently masters of their art to take a broad view of that limitation, with the result that in seven cases out of nine they gained far more than they lost thereby. For, finding themselves thus restricted, they were induced to simplify the action itself and to rid it carefully of all that was superfluous, and thus, reduced to its constituent essentials, it became only the ideal of an action, which was most successfully developed in that form in which it demanded the least addition from circumstances of time and place.

The French, on the other hand, did not appreciate true unity of action; their taste had already been spoilt by the wild intrigues of the Spanish school before they became acquainted with the simplicity of the Greeks; and they regarded the unities of time and place not as consequences of the unity of action, but as circumstances which were in themselves absolutely necessary to the representation of an action, and to which they had to

adapt their richer and more complicated actions with all the rigour demanded in the use of a chorus, which, however, they had altogether abolished. But as they found how difficult, nay, at times, how impossible this was, they effected a compromise with those tyrannical rules, from which they had not the courage to withdraw their entire adherence. Instead of a definite locality they introduced an indefinite one, which could be taken to include now this, now that spot; enough if these various spots were not too far apart and none of them required special scenery, so that the same scenery, more or less, could be used for the one as for the other. Instead of the unity of a day, they substituted the unity of duration; and any space of time, during which no mention was made of sunrise and sunset and no one went to bed, or, if at all, more than once, however much might occur in that space, was counted by them as one day.

Now no one would have objected to this; for even under these conditions excellent plays may unquestionably be written, and the proverb says: "Cut the wood where it is thinnest." But I must also allow my neighbour to do likewise. I must not always show him the thickest and toughest part and cry: "There you must cut! That is where I always cut!" Yet thus do the French critics one and all exclaim, especially when they are dealing with the dramatic works of the English. What an ado they make about regularity, which regularity they have rendered so easy for themselves! But I am tired of dwelling on these points.

THE MINGLING OF COMEDY AND TRAGEDY.

ALTHOUGH Lope de Vega is regarded as the founder of the Spanish drama, yet it was not he who introduced its hybrid tone. The public was already so accustomed to it that he had to adopt it against his will. In his didactic poem on the art of inventing new comedies he complains bitterly of the fact. Finding that it was impossible to work to the satisfaction of his contemporaries by following the rules and models of the ancients, he endeavoured at least to set limits to the prevailing irregularities of his time, and this was the object of his poem. He thought that, however crude and barbaric the national taste might be, it must nevertheless be founded upon proper principles; and that it was better to act according to these, even with constant uniformity, than to have none at all. Plays which do not observe the classical rules may yet observe other rules, and must, in fact, do so if they are to please. He therefore tried to lay down certain rules, deduced from the national taste; and the first of these was the combination of the serious and the ludicrous.

He says: "You may even let kings appear in your comedies. I hear, indeed, that our wise monarch (Philip II.) disapproved of this; either because he recognised that it was against the rules, or because he deemed it derogatory to the dignity of a king to be mixed up with the mob. I am quite prepared to admit that such a step tends back in the direction of the oldest form of comedy, in which even gods were introduced, as, for example, in the 'Amphitryon' of Plautus; and I know that Plutarch, in speaking of Menander, has not much to

say in favour of the old comedy. It is therefore somewhat difficult for me to defend our fashion. But since we Spaniards are gradually leaving art out of sight, the learned must remain silent on this point. It is true that the comic mingled with the tragic, a blending of Seneca and Terence, will produce as great a monstrosity as Pasiphae's Minotaur. Yet it so happens that this medley is pleasing: people refuse to see any other plays than such as are half serious and half comic; nature herself teaches us this variety, to which she owes a share of her beauty."

It is on account of these last words that I have cited the passage. Is it true that nature herself sets us an example by combining the common and the sublime, the droll and the serious, the merry and the sad? It would seem so. But in that case Lope has done more than he imagined; not only has he palliated the faults of his stage, but he has actually proved that this particular fault is no fault at all; for anything that is an imitation of nature cannot be a fault.

"Shakespeare," says one of our latest writers,¹ "of all poets since the time of Homer, the one who has known men best and has looked them through and through with an almost inconceivable intuition, from the king to the beggar, and from Julius Cæsar to Jack Falstaff; Shakespeare has been censured for having furnished his plays with either no plot at all or else a very faulty, irregular, and badly devised one, and for having combined the comic and the tragic in the most extraordinary fashion, so that it often happens that the same person, whose touching language has brought tears to our eyes, will shortly afterwards, by some strange conceit or quaint expression of his

¹ Wieland, in his *Agathon*.—TR.

feelings, chill us, and perhaps even make us laugh, thus rendering it very difficult for him afterwards to restore us to that mood in which he would have us. People blame Shakespeare for this, and do not consider that in this very particular his plays are natural representations of human life.

“The lives of most persons and, if we may say so, the life-courses of the bodies-politic themselves, in so far as we may regard these as moral beings, resemble in so many respects the blood-and-thunder tragedies¹ of old Gothic taste, that we might almost imagine the inventors of these latter to have been wiser than one usually thinks, and to have aimed at imitating nature as faithfully as the Greeks strove to beautify it, perhaps even to have held the secret intention of ridiculing human life. Not to speak of the accidental resemblance which lies in the fact that in those plays, as also in actual life, the most important parts are often taken by the very worst actors,—what can be more alike than the two kinds of blood-and-thunder tragedies in their construction, in the division and disposition of the scenes, in their plot and its development? How rarely do the authors of the one or the other ask themselves why they have done this or that in such and such a manner and not otherwise! How often do they surprise us by events for which we are not in the least prepared! How frequently it happens that personages enter or leave the stage without affording the slightest clue as to the reason of their arrival or departure! How much in both is left to chance; we often see the greatest effects proceeding from the most trifling causes. Again, it frequently happens that the most serious and weighty actions are treated in a loose and flippant manner, and

¹ “*Haupt und Staatsaktionen.*”

the most insignificant with absurd gravity. And when, in both cases, things have at last reached such a pitch of confusion and complication that we begin to despair of the possibility of their ever being set right again, how we rejoice at seeing the Gordian knot, not indeed unravelled, but severed, all of a sudden by a fresh sword-thrust or by the unexpected appearance, amid thunder and lightning, of some god descending from pasteboard clouds. This severance comes to the same thing as unravelling; the play is brought to an end in one way or another, and the spectators applaud or hiss as they will or may. Every one knows what an important personage the noble harlequin represents in the comic tragedies of which we are speaking. He appears to want to occupy a permanent place upon the stage of the German capital, presumably as a perpetual monument to the taste of our ancestors. Would to heaven that he represented no other personage upon the stage but himself! How many great acts upon the stage of this world have at all times been performed together with, or, what is worse, by means of a harlequin! How often have the greatest men, born to be the protecting genii of a throne, the benefactors of whole nations and ages, lived to see all their wisdom and valour frustrated by the petty practical joke of a harlequin, or of such who, if they do not wear his own peculiar jacket and yellow hose, yet bear his whole character! How often in both kinds of tragi-comedy the complication arises from the sole reason that the harlequin has, by some stupid and knavish piece of work, managed to thwart the designs of sensible people before they were aware of it!"

If in this comparison of the great and the small, the original and the counterfeit heroic farce, the satirical

mood were not so prominent, it might be considered the best apology for the comi-tragic or tragi-comic drama (mixed plays I have seen them styled elsewhere), and the most conscientious deduction of Lope's thoughts. But it would at the same time serve to confute them. For it would prove that the very example in actual life which should justify the combination of solemn earnestness and farcical merriment could equally well justify any dramatic monstrosity that has neither plot nor connection nor common sense. Consequently imitation of nature must either be no principle of art; or if it is, art would thereby cease to be art. At all events, it would reach no higher level than, say, the art of imitating the coloured veins of marble in plaster of Paris; be their direction and course what they may, the strangest cannot be so strange as to seem otherwise than natural; that alone appears unnatural which displays too much symmetry, equality, proportion, too much of that which in every other art constitutes art; the most artistic, in this sense, is here the worst, and the most irregular the best.

As a critic our author might speak quite differently. That which he here appears to defend so carefully he would without doubt condemn as an abortive remnant of barbaric taste, or at any rate as the first attempts of an art reviving among an uncivilised people, the form of which has been determined in a large measure by a conjunction of certain external causes or by pure accident, and in which reason and reflection have had but little or no share. He would hardly say that the first inventors of mixed plays (since the term has been coined, I may as well use it) "aimed at imitating nature as faithfully as the Greeks strove to beautify it."

These words "faithfully" and "beautify," as applied to imitation and to nature as the object of imitation, are liable to many misconceptions. There are persons who maintain that nature cannot possibly be imitated too faithfully, and that even those things which in actual life displease us, will, if faithfully imitated, please us in virtue of their imitation. There are others, again, who regard beautifying nature as an idle notion; a nature that aims at being more beautiful than nature itself, they say, is for that very reason unnatural. Both parties declare themselves to be admirers of nature as she is; the former see nothing to avoid, the latter nothing to add. To the one, therefore, the Gothic mixed plays must of necessity be pleasing; and the other would find it difficult to enjoy the masterpieces of the ancients.

But what if such were not the case? What if the former, great admirers though they be of common, every-day nature, nevertheless declare themselves against the mixture of the farcical and the interesting? What if the latter, despite their aversion to all that aims at being better and more beautiful than nature, could yet survey the entire theatre of the Greeks without experiencing the slightest displeasure on this account? How can we account for this contradiction?

We should have to return to our starting-point, and retract what we there said with regard to the two kinds of plays. But how could we do this without involving ourselves in fresh difficulties? The comparison of such blood-and-thunder tragedies, the value of which we are discussing, with human life and the course of the world in general is surely a very fair one!

I will offer a few suggestions, which, if they are not in themselves sufficiently thorough, may yet call forth more

thorough ones. The main idea is this: it is true, and yet not true, that the comic tragedy of Gothic origin aims at a faithful imitation of nature; it imitates faithfully but one half of nature, and neglects the other half altogether; it imitates the nature of appearances, without in the least regarding the nature of our feelings and faculties.

In nature everything is connected; everything is intersected, everything alters, everything changes from one into another. But in its complete and endless variety it is a spectacle for none but an infinite spirit. In order that finite beings may have a share in this enjoyment, they are endowed with the power of setting arbitrary limits to it, of eliminating, and of guiding their attention at will.

This power is exercised by us during every moment of our lives; without it we should have no such thing as life; in the extreme diversity of our feelings we should feel nothing; we should be the constant victims of present impressions; we should dream without knowing what we were dreaming.

The aim of art is to spare us this abstraction in the realm of the beautiful, to facilitate the concentration of our attention. All in nature that we abstract, or wish to abstract, in our minds from an object or a combination of various objects, be it in time or in space, art in reality abstracts for us, and by its means the said object or combination of objects is placed before us as purely and concisely as the sensations which are to be provoked thereby may permit.

If we witness any weighty and affecting event, and another event of comparative unimportance intervenes, we do our very utmost to avoid the distraction with which

the latter threatens us. We abstract our minds from it; and we must of necessity be displeased at encountering in art what we would gladly dispense with in nature.

Only if the same event in its progress assumes in turn every degree of interest; if these various degrees not merely follow one another, but are of necessity evolved from one another; if earnestness gives place to laughter, sadness to joy, or *vice versâ*, so directly and inevitably that it is impossible to form an abstraction of the one or the other by itself: then, and only then, do we not require it in art, and art knows how to turn this very impossibility to account.

But enough of this; it is evident whither I am tending.

ARISTOTLE AND TRAGEDY.

CRÉBILLON is known among the French as "the Terrible." I greatly fear that he has received this name more on account of the terror which should not exist in tragedy, than on account of that legitimate terror which the philosopher includes amongst the essentials of tragedy.

And this ought not to have been named terror at all. The word used by Aristotle means fear: fear and pity, he says, should be provoked by tragedy, not terror and pity. Terror is, it is true, a species of fear; it is a sudden, overwhelming fear. But this very suddenness, this surprise, which is included in the conception of the term, clearly shows that those who here substituted the word terror for fear did not understand to what kind of fear Aristotle was referring.

"Pity," says Aristotle, "demands a person who suffers

undeservedly, and fear requires him to be one of ourselves. The villain is neither the one nor the other, and his misfortunes consequently do not excite either pity or fear."¹

Fear, as I have said, has been called terror by modern commentators and translators; and this substitution has enabled them to bring the most extraordinary charges against the philosopher.

"It has not been found possible," says one of this crowd,² "to agree as to the explanation of terror; and indeed it contains in every respect one superfluous link which hampers its universality and limits it too much. If Aristotle, in adding the words 'one of ourselves,' was merely thinking of the similarity of mankind, in the sense that the spectator and the acting personage are both human beings, however widely they may differ from each other in character, dignity, and rank: then such an addition was unnecessary, for the fact was self-evident. If, on the contrary, he was of opinion that terror could only be excited by virtuous persons or by such as are afflicted with venial faults: then he was mistaken, for common sense and experience are opposed to him. Terror undoubtedly springs from a feeling of humanity; for every human being is subject to it, and every human being is touched by this feeling at the adverse fortunes of a fellow-creature. There may possibly be persons who deny this with regard to themselves; but such a denial would only be a disavowal of their natural sensibility, a mere boast founded upon defective principles, and therefore no argument. Now if a vicious person, upon whom our attention is centred, meets with an

¹ *Poetics*, cap. xiii.

² Schmidt, in his Introduction to *The Comic Theatre*.

unexpected misfortune, we lose sight of the reprobate and behold only the human being. The sight of human suffering in general makes us sad, and this sudden feeling of sadness which comes over us is terror."

All this is perfectly true, but it is out of place. For what does it prove against Aristotle? Nothing at all. Aristotle is not thinking of this kind of terror when he speaks of that fear which can only be evoked by one of our fellow-creatures. Such fear, with which we are seized when we are suddenly brought face to face with a misfortune that threatens another person, is a sympathetic fear, and should therefore be included in the term pity. Aristotle would not say "Pity and Fear," if by the latter he understood no more than merely a modified form of pity.

"Pity," says the author of *Letters on the Emotions*,¹ "is a compound emotion consisting of love for an object and displeasure at its misfortunes. The movements by which pity manifests itself differ from the simple symptoms of love as well as from those of displeasure; for pity is a mere manifestation. But how varied this manifestation may be! Let the one limitation of time be but changed in a commiserated misfortune, and pity will manifest itself by totally different signs. The sight of Electra, weeping over her brother's urn, fills us with compassionate grief; for she thinks that the misfortune has taken place and is lamenting the loss which she has sustained. The sufferings of Philoctetes likewise call forth our pity, but in this case it is pity of a somewhat different nature; for the afflictions which overtake this virtuous man are actually present and seize him before our very eyes. But what do we feel when Œdipus is

¹ Moses Mendelssohn.

seized with terror, as the fatal secret is suddenly revealed; when Monime is alarmed at seeing the jealous Mithridates turn pale; when the virtuous Desdemona becomes frightened as she hears the threatening words of her Othello, erstwhile so tender? We still feel pity. But pitiful terror, pitiful alarm, pitiful fear. The movements are various; but the essence of the emotion is in all cases identical. For since love is ever connected with a willingness to put ourselves in the place of the person whom we love, we must share every kind of misfortune with that person; and this is very expressively termed compassion or pity. Why then should not also fear, terror, wrath, jealousy, revenge—in fact, all kinds of unpleasant emotions, even envy not excepted, spring from pity? We may hereby see how unskillfully the majority of critics divide the tragic passions into terror and pity. Terror and pity! Is theatrical terror no pity, then? For whom does the spectator tremble when Merope draws the dagger upon her own son? Certainly not for himself, but for Ægisthus, whose preservation he so earnestly desires, and for the deluded queen who regards him as the murderer of her son. But if we apply the name of pity to the mere displeasure which the present misfortunes of a fellow-creature excite in us: then we must draw a distinction between pity properly so called, on the one hand, and not only terror, but all other feelings communicated to us by a fellow-creature, on the other.”

These ideas are so correct, so clear, so perspicuous, that every one, it seems to us, could and ought to hold them. Nevertheless I will not ascribe the acute observations of the new philosopher to the ancient one; I am

too well acquainted with the former's contributions to the doctrine of mixed sensations, for the true theory of which we are indebted to him alone. But what he has explained so thoroughly, Aristotle may also, on the whole, have experienced; at all events it cannot be denied that Aristotle must either have believed that tragedy could and should excite nothing but genuine pity, nothing but the displeasure experienced at the present misfortunes of a fellow-creature, which seems highly improbable; or else he included under the term pity all passions in general that can be communicated to us by another.

For it certainly was not Aristotle who made the division, so justly censured, of the tragic passions into pity and terror. He has been misread and mistranslated. He speaks of pity and fear, not of pity and terror; and the fear to which he refers is not that which an impending misfortune to another person excites in us on his behalf, but that which, from our resemblance to the victim, we feel on our own behalf; it is the fear that the disasters which we see threatening him may overtake us also; it is the fear that we may ourselves become the objects of commiseration. In a word: this fear is pity referred back to ourselves.

Aristotle always requires to be interpreted through himself. If any person were thinking of giving us a new commentary upon his "Poetics," which should excel that of Dacier, I would strongly advise him, before so doing, to read the philosopher's works from beginning to end. He will come across explanations bearing upon the art of poetry, where he least expects to find them; and he must above all things study the treatises on rhetoric and ethics. It might indeed be supposed that the school-

men, who had the writings of Aristotle at their finger ends, would long ago have discovered these explanatory passages. Yet the "Poetics" was the very work to which they paid the least attention. They moreover lacked other knowledge without which the explanations referred to could not have borne fruit; they were not acquainted with the theatre and its masterpieces.

The true explanation of this fear, which Aristotle mentions in conjunction with tragic pity, is to be found in the fifth and eighth chapters of the second book of his "Rhetoric." It would have been an easy matter to remember these chapters; yet not one of his commentators seems to have called them to mind; at any rate not one has made that use of them which they afford. For even those who perceived, without their aid, that this fear was not the same as compassionate terror, might still have learnt an important fact from them—viz., the reason why the Stagyræite here combines pity with fear, why he combines it with fear alone, and not with any other passion or passions. Of the reason of this they know nothing, and I for my part should like to hear what answer their own intelligence would suggest to them, if they were asked, for example, the following question: Why cannot and may not tragedy excite pity and admiration equally as well as pity and fear?

All, however, depends upon the conception which Aristotle framed of pity. Now he was of opinion that a misfortune which is intended as the object of our pity, must of necessity be of such a nature that we are capable of dreading its happening to ourselves also, or to one of our friends. And where there was not this fear, he argued, there could be no pity; for neither he whom misfortune had so overwhelmed that he saw nothing

further to fear, nor he who considered his happiness so complete that he could not imagine any misfortune overtaking him ; neither the desperate man nor the overconfident one is in the habit of feeling pity for others. He therefore explains the fearful and the pitiable by means of each other. We find those things fearful, he says, which would awaken our pity if they had befallen, or were about to befall, another person ; and we find those things pitiable which we should fear if they were about to happen to ourselves. It is not enough, therefore, that the sufferer, for whom we are to feel pity, may not deserve his misfortune, though he may have brought it upon himself by his own weakness : his injured innocence, or rather his error, for which he is made to pay too severe a penalty, would lose its effect upon us, would fail to excite our pity, unless we saw that there was a possibility of his calamity overtaking us also. Now this possibility arises, and it becomes the more probable, if the poet does not represent him worse than mankind in general ; if he lets him think and act exactly as we should have thought and acted in his place, or as we imagine we should have done ; if, in short, he makes him of the same flesh and blood as ourselves. It is this resemblance that gives rise to the fear that our fate may as easily become like his as we feel ourselves to be like him ; and it is this fear that serves as it were to mature our pity.

Such were Aristotle's thoughts concerning pity, and by their aid alone can we arrive at the true reason why, in his definition of tragedy, fear was the only emotion which he named in conjunction with pity. It is not that this fear is a separate passion independent of pity, which might be excited now with pity, and now without it, in the same way as pity can be excited now with and now

without fear. This was Corneille's error. Aristotle's reason was that, in his definition of pity, fear was of necessity included, because nothing could awaken our pity which did not at the same time excite our fear.

Corneille had already written all his plays before he set himself to commentate upon the "Poetics" of Aristotle.¹ For half a century he had been working for the theatre, and after such experience he might undoubtedly have furnished us with much valuable information concerning the ancient dramatic code, if, during the time of his labours, he had but studied it a little more diligently. But this he appears only to have done in so far as the mechanical rules of his art were concerned. In the more essential points he disregarded it; and when he found in the end that he had violated its laws, a thing which he was by no means disposed to admit, he sought to clear himself by the help of comments, and caused his pretended master to say things of which he had never thought.

Corneille had brought martyrs upon the stage and portrayed them as the most perfect and immaculate of human beings; he had produced the most repulsive monsters in Prusias, Phocas, and Cleopatra; and of both these species Aristotle declares that they are unsuitable for tragedy, since neither of them can awaken pity or fear. What does Corneille say in answer to this? How does he contrive to prevent both his own authority and that of Aristotle from being disparaged by this contra-

¹ He says: "Je hasarderai quelque chose sur cinquante ans de travail pour la scène," in his dissertation on the Drama. His first play, "Mélite," dates from 1625, and his last, "Suréna," from 1675. This makes exactly fifty years, so that in his commentaries upon Aristotle he was certainly able to have an eye to all his plays.

diction? "We can easily come to terms with Aristotle," he says;¹ "we need only assume that he did not mean to maintain that both fear and pity were required at the same time to effect the purification of our passions, which according to him should be the chief aim of tragedy, but that one of these means would suffice. We can find this explanation confirmed in his own writings," he continues, "if we carefully weigh the reasons given by him for the exclusion of those events which he censures in tragedies. He never says: this or that event is out of place in tragedy because it merely awakens pity, and not fear; or again, such a thing is intolerable because it simply produces fear, without calling forth pity. No; he excludes such events because, as he says, they fail to excite either pity or fear; and he thereby gives us to understand that he finds them unsuitable because the one is wanting as well as the other, and that he would not condemn them if they did but produce one of these effects."

Now this is utterly wrong. And I cannot understand why Dacier, who, as a rule, did not fail to observe the false interpretations which Corneille tried to place upon the text of Aristotle to suit his own purpose, should have overlooked this, the worst example of all. Yet, after all, how could he help overlooking it, since it never occurred to him to study the philosopher's definition of pity? Corneille's ideas on this point are, as I have said, utterly wrong. Aristotle cannot have meant anything of the kind, or else we must believe that he could have so far forgotten his own definitions as to contradict himself in the most flagrant manner. If, according to his doctrine, no misfortune that befalls another can excite our pity,

¹ "Il est aisé de nous accommoder avec Aristote," etc.

unless we are afraid that it may also overtake ourselves: then no action in tragedy, which could only excite pity, and not fear, would have appeared suitable to him; for he deemed the thing itself an impossibility. Such actions did not exist for him; on the contrary, as soon as they reached a pitch at which they were capable of awakening our pity, they must, he opined, also awaken fear for ourselves; or rather, it was only by means of this fear that they called forth our pity. Still less could he conceive of an action in a tragedy, which could awaken fear for ourselves without at the same time calling forth our pity; for he was convinced that anything which awakens in us fear for ourselves, must also call forth our pity, as soon as we see others threatened or overtaken by it; and this is precisely what happens in tragedy, where we see all the evils which we fear, happening not to ourselves, but to others.

In speaking of those actions which are unsuitable for tragedy, Aristotle, it is true, avails himself more than once of the expression that they excite *neither* pity *nor* fear. Yet if Corneille has allowed himself to be misled by this *neither nor*, so much the worse for him. These disjunctive particles do not always express what he intends them to express. For if we use them to deny two or more properties of an object, the existence of the object, notwithstanding that one or other of these properties is wanting to it, depends on whether the latter can be as easily separated in nature as we separate them in the abstract by means of symbolic expressions. If, for example, we say, in speaking of a woman, that she has neither beauty nor wit, we certainly wish to convey that we should be satisfied if she possessed either of these qualities; for wit and beauty can not only be separated in thought, but they are also separate in reality. But if

we say: "This man believes in neither heaven nor hell," do we also wish to imply that we should be satisfied if he did but believe in one of the two; if he believed in heaven, but not in hell; or in hell, but not in heaven? Surely not; for he who believes in the one must of necessity believe in the other also. Heaven and hell, punishment and reward, are correlative terms; if the one exists so must the other. Or, to borrow an example from a sister-art, if we say: "This painting is worthless; it has neither outline nor colour," do we wish it to be inferred that there could be such a thing as a good painting possessing only one of these properties? All this is very clear.

But what if Aristotle's definition of pity were false? What if we found that we could also feel pity for evils and calamities which we have in nowise to fear for ourselves?

Fear for ourselves is not necessary, it is true, to produce in us a feeling of displeasure at the physical suffering of a person whom we love. Such displeasure arises simply from our perception of the imperfection, just as our love arises from that of the perfections of the individual; and when these feelings of pleasure and displeasure are united, they give rise to that mixed feeling which we term pity.

Yet even then, I do not think that Aristotle's position is at all weakened.

For although we can feel pity for others without experiencing any fear for ourselves, it is indisputable that our pity, when accompanied by such a fear, becomes much stronger and more vivid than it could otherwise be. And what is there to prevent us from assuming that the mixed sensation which we feel on beholding the physical

suffering of a beloved object, can only by the addition of fear for ourselves attain a sufficient degree of intensity to deserve the name of an effective force (*Affekt*).

This is precisely what Aristotle assumed. He did not regard pity according to its primary emotions; he regarded it merely as an effective force (*Affekt*). Without mistaking the former, he only denied to the spark the name of flame. Compassionate emotions, unaccompanied by fear for ourselves, he terms philanthropy; and he reserves the name of pity for those stronger emotions of the same kind, which are combined with fear for ourselves. According to him, therefore, the misfortunes of a villain will excite neither our pity nor our fear; yet he does not on this account deny him all power of moving us. Even the villain is still a human being possessing, in spite of all his moral imperfections, enough perfections to make us rather hope against his ruin or destruction, and to awaken in us, if we behold it, something akin to pity, the rudiments, as it were, of pity. But this rudimentary feeling, as I have already pointed out, he does not call pity but philanthropy. "A villain," he tells us, "must never be allowed to pass from a state of adversity to one of prosperity; for nothing could be more untrigical; he would then lack all that he should have, and would call forth neither philanthropy, nor pity, nor fear. Neither must it be an utter villain who is plunged from a state of prosperity into one of adversity; for such an event might, it is true, excite philanthropy, but not pity, nor yet fear." I know of nothing more feeble and absurd than the common rendering of this word "philanthropy." Its adjective is usually translated into Latin by *hominibus gratum*; into French by *ce qui peut faire quelque plaisir*; and into German by *was Vergnügen*

machen kann ("what may give pleasure"). Goulston alone, as far as I can see, appears to have caught the philosopher's meaning; he translates *φιλόανθρωπον* by *quod humanitatis sensu tangat*. For this word philanthropy is used to signify that feeling which the misfortunes even of a villain can awaken; it is not the satisfaction which we feel at his well-merited punishment, but the common feeling of human sympathy which comes over us when we see him suffer, even though we are given to understand that his suffering is amply deserved. Herr Curtius would indeed confine this feeling of pity for an unfortunate villain to one section only of the evils to which he is liable. "Those accidents to the vicious," he says, "which excite in us neither terror nor pity, must be the results of their vices; for, were they to happen to them by chance, or undeservedly, the sufferers would still retain in the hearts of the spectators the privileges of humanity, which does not withhold its pity from a villain who suffers innocently." But he does not appear to have considered this sufficiently. For even in cases where the misfortune that overtakes the villain is the direct outcome of his crime, we cannot forbear suffering with him at the sight of his punishment. "Behold the mob," says the author of *Letters on the Emotions*, "as they crowd closely around the condemned criminal! They have heard of all the outrages which the villain has committed; they have been horrified at his conduct, and have perhaps even hated him. Now he is dragged, pale and fainting, to the terrible scaffold. The crowd press forward, some stand on tiptoe, others climb on to the roofs, to see how his features change at the approach of death. His sentence is pronounced; the executioner steps forward; another moment and all will be over. How earnestly all the

spectators now wish that he might be pardoned! What? That same person, the object of their hatred, whom but a moment before they would themselves have condemned to death? What has happened to send this sudden ray of human love through their hearts? Is it not his approaching doom, the aspect of the direst physical calamity, that, as it were, reconciles us to the worst offender and secures him our affection? Without love it would be impossible to feel pity for his fate."

And it is this very love for our fellow-creatures, I say, which is never entirely absent from our hearts, which, hidden beneath other and stronger emotions, lies smouldering unceasingly, and needs but a favourable gust, so to speak, of misfortune, pain, or crime, to fan it into a flame of pity; this very love it is that Aristotle understands under the name of philanthropy. We are right in looking upon it as a kind of pity. But neither was Aristotle wrong in giving it a separate name, to distinguish it, as I have said, from the highest grade of compassionate emotions, in which the addition of a probable fear for ourselves converts those emotions into effective forces (*Affekt*).

I must here meet another objection. If Aristotle conceived of the effectiveness (*Affekt*) of pity as being necessarily combined with fear for ourselves, what necessity was there for him to make special mention of fear? The word pity already included it, and it would have been sufficient for him to say: tragedy ought to effect the purification of our passions by exciting our pity. For the addition of the word fear does not alter the sense, and only makes that which he says ambiguous and uncertain.

I answer: if Aristotle had merely wished to teach us what passions can and ought to be awakened by tragedy, he might indeed have omitted all mention of fear, and would no doubt have done so, for no philosopher was ever more sparing of his words than he. But he wanted to tell us at the same time what passions ought to be purified by means of those which tragedy awakens in us; and for this purpose he was obliged to include fear. For although, according to him, the effective power (*Affekt*) of pity cannot but be connected with fear for ourselves both within and without the theatre; although fear is a necessary ingredient of pity; yet the converse does not hold good, and pity for others is no ingredient of fear for ourselves. As soon as the tragedy is over, our pity ceases; and of all the emotions which we have experienced, none remains save the possible fear which the misfortunes we have pitied have led us to entertain for ourselves. This fear we retain; and whereas before, as an ingredient of pity, it helped to purify our pity, it now helps, as an emotion continuing independently and by itself, to purify itself. Consequently, in order to show that it can and does act thus, Aristotle found it necessary to mention it separately.

It is undeniable that Aristotle never intended to give a strict logical definition of a tragedy. For instead of confining himself merely to those properties which are essential to it, he has included several others which are purely accidental to it, and which had been rendered necessary by the customs of his time. But, leaving these aside and reducing the remaining characteristics to their simplest form, we shall arrive at a concise and exact definition, viz., that a tragedy is, in a word, a poem which excites pity. According to its genus, it is the

imitation of an action, like the epic and the comedy; but according to its species, it is the imitation of an action deserving of pity. From these two conceptions all its rules may be clearly deduced, and even its dramatic form may be determined by them.

This latter statement may be doubted. At all events I know of no critic who ever thought of attempting this. They all look upon the dramatic form of a tragedy as something traditional, which is what it is simply because it happens to be so, and which is left so because it is found to be good. Aristotle alone has discerned the reason of it; but in his definition he assumes it as understood instead of pointing it out clearly. "A tragedy," he tells us, "is the imitation of an action which, not by means of narration, but by means of pity and fear, serves to effect the purification of these and similar passions." These are his actual words. Who could help noticing here the curious antithesis, "not by means of narration, but by means of pity and fear"? Pity and fear are the means employed by tragedy to attain its end, and the narration can only refer to the manner in which these means are employed or avoided. Would not Aristotle, therefore, appear to have omitted something here? Is not the proper antithesis of the narration, namely, the dramatic form, manifestly wanting? Now, how do the translators repair this omission? Some manage carefully to circumvent it; others fill it in, but only with words. They all look upon it as nothing but a carelessly worded sentence, to which they do not consider themselves bound to adhere, provided they convey the philosopher's meaning. Dacier's translation runs as follows: "*d'une action,—qui, sans le secours de la narration, par le moyen de la compassion et de la terreur,*"

etc. Curtius says, "of an action, which not by the poet's narration, but (by the representation of the action itself) by means of terror and pity serves to purify us of the faults in the passions represented." Quite so! They both say what Aristotle wishes to convey; only they do not say it *as* he says it. Yet this "*as*" is of importance; for the sentence is not really so carelessly worded as one might imagine. Briefly stated, the matter stands as follows: Aristotle found that pity of necessity demands some present misfortune; that misfortunes which have happened long ago or may happen in the distant future either fail to awaken our compassion altogether or else awaken it to a far lesser degree than would a present misfortune; that it is consequently necessary to represent the action which is to excite our pity, not as having already occurred, that is to say, in a narrative form, but as actually occurring, that is to say, in a dramatic form. And this fact, that our pity is hardly, if at all, awakened by the narration, but is almost entirely aroused by the actual sight; this fact alone justified him in substituting the thing itself in his definition in place of the form of the thing, because the thing itself is only capable of this one form. Had he considered it possible that our pity could also be awakened by the narration, he would indeed have been guilty of an important omission in saying, "not by means of narration, but by means of pity and fear." Being convinced, however, that in representation, pity and fear can only be excited by means of the dramatic form, he was justified in making that omission for the sake of brevity. I refer my readers to the ninth chapter of the second Book of his "*Rhetoric*."

And lastly, as regards the moral purpose which Aristotle assigns to tragedy and which he thought it necessary to

include in his definition of the same, the controversies to which it has given rise, especially in modern times, are well known. Now I am confident of being able to prove that all who have declared themselves against it have failed to grasp Aristotle's meaning. They have invested him with their own particular views, without knowing for certain what his views were. They combat strange notions which originate from themselves, and in refuting the emanations of their own brains they imagine that they incontrovertibly confute the philosopher. I cannot discuss this matter in detail here. But in order not to appear to speak without proof, I will add two observations.

(1.) They make Aristotle say: "Tragedy should, by means of terror and pity, purify us from the faults of the passions represented." The passions represented? If, therefore, the hero meets with misfortune owing to his curiosity, his ambition, his love, or his wrath: then our curiosity, ambition, love or wrath, is the passion which the tragedy is to purify? Aristotle thought nothing of the kind. And so these gentlemen go on disputing; their imagination transforms wind-mills into giants; confident in their victory, they tilt at them, nor do they pay the slightest heed to Sancho, who has only common-sense to commend him, and who, seated upon his more cautious quadruped, calls after them urging them not to be over-hasty, but to first look carefully around them. *Τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων*, says Aristotle; and that does not mean "the passions represented"; they should have translated it by "these and similar ones," or "the passions awakened." The *τοιούτων* refers solely to the preceding "pity and fear"; tragedy is to excite our pity and our fear, in order to purify merely these and similar

passions, but not all passions without distinction. He, however, uses the word *τοιούτων*, and not *τούτων*; he says "these and similar," and not simply "these," in order to show that by the term pity he understands not merely pity properly so-called, but all philanthropic feelings in general, and likewise, by the term fear, not merely the displeasure with which we anticipate an impending misfortune, but also every kind of displeasure which is allied to it, the displeasure at present and past misfortunes, sorrows, and griefs. Thus the pity and the fear excited by tragedy are to purify our pity and our fear in a widened sense; they are, however, to purify these alone, and no other passions.

Useful lessons and examples, serving to purify other passions also, may, it is true, be found in tragedy; but these do not form part of its aim; it shares them in common with the epic and the comedy, inasmuch as it is a poem, an imitation of an action in general, but not in so far as it is a tragedy, an imitation of an action deserving of pity in particular. All species of poetry aim at making us better than we are; it is a lamentable thing to have to prove this first, and still more so to find even poets who doubt it. But every species of poetry cannot better everything, or at any rate it cannot better all things equally; but that direction in which each is best capable of effecting improvement, and in which no other species can do so to the same degree, that, and that alone, forms its peculiar aim.

(2.) Seeing that Aristotle's opponents were not careful to observe what passions he considered that tragedy should purify in us by means of pity and fear: it was but natural that they should misinterpret the purification

itself. At the end of his "Politics," where he speaks of the purification of the passions by means of music, Aristotle promises to give a fuller account of this purification in his "Poetics." "Since, however," says Corneille, "there is no mention of it in this work, the majority of his commentators have arrived at the conclusion that it must have reached us in an incomplete form." No mention of it? For my part, I think that even in what remains to us of his "Poetics," be it much or little, there can be found all that he deemed it necessary to say on this subject to any one not altogether unacquainted with his other philosophical writings. Corneille himself noticed one passage which he thought sufficiently clear to enable us to discover the manner in which a purification of the passions is effected by tragedy, viz., the passage in which Aristotle says: "Pity demands an innocent sufferer, and fear one of our fellow-creatures." Now this passage is a very important one; only Corneille made a wrong use of it, and he could hardly help doing so, seeing that his thoughts were running on the purification of the passions in general. "Our pity for a misfortune," he says, "with which we see a fellow-creature afflicted, awakens a fear in us lest a similar misfortune overtake ourselves; this fear awakens a desire to evade it, and this desire an endeavour to purify, to moderate, to ameliorate, and even to eradicate entirely that passion owing to which the object of our pity meets with the misfortune before our very eyes. For our common sense tells us that the cause must be removed if the effect is to be avoided." But this reasoning, whereby fear is made the mere instrument with which pity effects a purification of the passions, is false and cannot possibly be what Aristotle

wished to convey. For in that case tragedy would be capable of purifying all the passions except the very two which Aristotle expressly tells us it ought to purify. It would be capable of purifying our wrath, our curiosity, our envy, our ambition, our hatred and our love, accordingly as it is the one or the other of these passions that has brought misfortune upon the object of our pity. Only our pity and our fear would it be unable to purify. For pity and fear are the passions which we, and not the acting personages, feel in tragedy; they are the passions by means of which the acting personages move us; they are not the passions which lead to their own misfortune. I am, of course, quite aware that there might be a play in which they perform both functions. But I have never yet come across one in which the suffering person was plunged into misfortune by means of misconceived pity or misconceived fear. And yet such a play would be the only one embodying, according to Corneille's interpretation, the ideas which Aristotle applied to all tragedies; and even there those ideas would not be carried into practice in the way demanded by the latter. Such a play would form, as it were, the point at which two inclined straight lines intersect never to meet again in all eternity. Dacier could not go so far wrong in interpreting Aristotle's meaning. He was bound to pay more attention to the words of his author, and these distinctly state that our pity and our fear are to be purified by the pity and the fear awakened by tragedy. But thinking, no doubt, that the purpose of tragedy would be very insignificant if it were merely confined to these limitations, he allowed himself to be persuaded, by Corneille's explanation, to assign to it a similar purification of all the other passions. And when Corneille, for

his part, denied this and proved by examples that he held it to be a beautiful thought rather than a thing generally attainable, Dacier had to accept these same examples, and thus found himself in such straits that he was forced to make the most violent twists and turns to extricate himself and his Aristotle. I say *his* Aristotle; for the real one stands in no need of such twists and turns. To repeat it once again, the latter thought of no other passions which should be purified in tragedy by means of pity and fear, save only pity and fear themselves; and it was a matter of indifference to him whether a tragedy contributed much or little to the purification of the rest of the passions. Dacier should have confined himself to that purification of which Aristotle speaks; but in that case he would certainly have had to combine it with a broader conception. "It is not difficult to explain," he tells us, "how tragedy excites pity and fear in order to purify pity and fear. It excites these passions by displaying to us the misfortunes into which our fellow-creatures have been plunged through unpremeditated faults; and it purifies them by acquainting us with these misfortunes and by teaching us neither to fear them too much, nor to be too much affected by them, if they should happen to ourselves. It enables persons to bear the most untoward accidents bravely, and causes the most wretched to deem themselves fortunate when they compare their woes with the still greater ones represented in tragedy. For in what condition could a man be found who, on beholding an *Œdipus*, a *Philoctetes*, or an *Orestes*, would not confess that all the evils which he has to suffer are as nothing when compared to those which afflict these men?" This is quite true; and the explanation cannot have

cost Dacier much reflection. He found it almost word for word in one of the Stoics who always had an eye to apathy. Without urging that the feeling of our own woe does not leave much room for pity, and that consequently in the case of a sufferer whose pity cannot be awakened, the purification or diminution of his sorrow cannot be brought about by pity: I will allow all his remarks to hold good. I would only ask: to what do all his statements amount? Has he said anything further than that pity purifies our fear? Certainly not; and yet this is but a quarter of what Aristotle intends to convey. For when the latter asserts that tragedy excites pity and fear in order to purify pity and fear, surely any one can see that this means far more than Dacier has thought it advisable to state. According to the different combinations of these various conceptions, if it is attempted to give the entire meaning of Aristotle, it must be shown successively (1) how tragic pity can, and in reality does, purify our pity; (2) how tragic fear purifies our fear; (3) how tragic pity purifies our fear; and (4) how tragic fear purifies our pity. Now Dacier confined himself merely to the third combination, and even this one he did not treat carefully, but left it only half explained. For if an attempt is made to arrive at a correct and complete conception of the Aristotelian doctrine of the purification of the passions, it will be found that each of the four combinations above mentioned includes in it a twofold contingency, which may be briefly stated as follows. Since the purification rests upon nothing else but the transformation of passions into virtuous habits, and since, according to our philosopher, every virtue is situated midway between two extremes; it follows that tragedy, if it is to transform our pity into a virtue, must be able to

purify us from the two extremes of pity; the same applies in the case of fear. Tragic pity must not only purify the soul of him who feels too much pity, but also of him who feels too little. Tragic fear must not only purify the soul of him who fears no manner of misfortune, but also of him who is afraid of every misfortune however distant and improbable it may be. In the same way, tragic pity, in regard to fear, must steer between this too much and this too little; and conversely, tragic fear in regard to pity. Dacier, as I have said, has only shown how tragic pity may moderate excessive fear, but not how its entire absence may be remedied, nor how it may be wholesomely increased in him who has too little of it; not to mention that he has omitted to say anything of the rest. Those who came after him have not in the least repaired his omissions; but in order to settle the dispute concerning the utility of tragedy in their own minds, they have drawn matters into it which apply to poetry in general but in nowise to tragedy as such in particular; they have maintained, for instance, that tragedy is intended to feed and strengthen the feelings of humanity, to inculcate a love of virtue, a hatred of vice, and so on;¹ but, my good sir, what poem should not do the same? Then if this is the intention of every poem, it cannot form the distinctive feature of tragedy; and this cannot therefore be what we were seeking.

To what end the hard work of dramatic form? Why build a theatre, disguise men and women, burden their memories, and assemble the whole town in one place, if

¹ Curtius, in his Dissertation upon the aims of Tragedy, appended to Aristotle's Poetics.

I intend my work and its representation to produce nothing more than some of those emotions which could be as well produced by any good story that every one could read at home for himself?

The dramatic form is the only one in which pity and fear may be aroused; at all events in no other form can these passions be awakened to such a degree. And yet people prefer to awaken in it all other emotions rather than these, and to use it for every other purpose than the one for which it is pre-eminently adapted.

The public is satisfied; this is well and yet not well. One has no special longing for the food with which one is bound to put up.

It is well known how intent the Greeks and the Romans were upon their plays, especially the former upon their tragedies. What coldness and indifference our public, on the other hand, show towards the theatre! To what must we attribute this difference, if it be not to the fact that the Greeks felt themselves animated by their stage with such intense and extraordinary emotions that they could hardly await the moment to experience them again and again; whereas we, on the other hand, derive such feeble impressions from our stage that we rarely consider it worth the time and the money to procure them? Most of us go to the theatre almost invariably for the sake of satisfying our curiosity or of killing time, for the sake of fashion or of company, from a desire to see and be seen; very few of us, and those but seldom, go from any other motive.

When I say we, our public, our stage, I do not mean the Germans only. We Germans candidly admit that we as yet possess no theatre. What many of our critics, who join us in this confession and who are great admirers

of the French theatre, think when they admit it, I am unable to say. But I know what my own views on the matter are. I am of opinion that not only we Germans, but also those who boast of having possessed a theatre for a century already, nay more, who brag of having the best theatre in all Europe,—that even the French themselves have as yet no theatre.

At all events, they have no tragic one. The impressions produced by French tragedy are absolutely cold and feeble. Hear what a Frenchman himself has to say of them.

“The surpassing beauties of our theatre,” says M. de Voltaire, “were combined with a hidden fault which had escaped notice because the public could not of its own accord have any higher ideas than those imparted to it by the models of the great masters. Saint-Evremont has alone discovered this fault; he says that our plays do not make a sufficient impression, that that which should excite pity only awakens tenderness, that gentle emotion takes the place of agitation, and surprise that of terror; that our feelings, in short, do not attain a sufficient degree of intensity. It cannot be denied that Saint-Evremont has laid his finger upon the secret sore of the French theatre. It may be urged that Saint-Evremont was the author of a wretched comedy, ‘*Sir Politic Wouldbe*,’ and of another equally wretched one called ‘*The Operas*’; that his small society verses are the weakest and most trivial of their kind; and that he was nothing but a poetaster. One may not have a spark of genius, and yet possess much wit and taste. Now he had unquestionably a very refined taste; this is borne out by the fact that he divined the true reason why most of our plays are so tame and cold. We have always

lacked a certain degree of warmth; everything else we possessed."

In other words: we possessed everything excepting only that which we most needed; our tragedies were excellent, but for the fact that they were not tragedies at all. And why were they not tragedies?

"This coldness," Voltaire continues, "this monotonous tameness, arose in part from the petty spirit of gallantry which was at that time so prevalent amongst our courtiers, and which transformed a tragedy into a series of amorous dialogues after the taste of *Cyrus* and *Clelie*. The only plays that formed an exception to this rule consisted of lengthy political tirades, such as *spoilt Sertorius*, made *Otho* cold, *Surena* and *Attila* wretched. There was yet another cause that prevented the display of high pathos upon our stage and hindered the action from becoming truly tragic, and that was the narrow, poorly-constructed theatre with its paltry decorations. What room was there for action upon a stage composed of a few dozen boards, which was moreover filled with spectators? How could the eyes of the latter be captivated, dazzled and illuded, by any display of pomp and accessories? How could great tragic actions be performed there? How could the poet's imagination be allowed free play? The pieces had to consist of lengthy descriptions, so that they resembled dialogues rather than plays. Every actor was bent upon shining in a long monologue, and such plays as did not contain any were rejected. In this form all theatrical action disappeared, as did also all intense display of the passions, all powerful pictures of human misery, all harrowing traits which could pierce to the very soul; the spectator's heart, instead of being rent asunder, was scarcely touched."

The first reason is a perfectly correct one. Gallantry and politics always leave a cold impression; and no poet has ever yet succeeded in arousing pity and fear by means of them. The former make us imagine that we hear only the *fat* or the schoolmaster; the latter would have us hear nothing but the human being.

But how about the second reason? Can it be possible that the absence of a spacious theatre and of good scenery should have exercised such an influence upon the genius of the poet? Is it true that every tragic plot requires pomp and accessories? Or should not the poet rather construct his play in such a manner that it could produce its full effect even without these additions?

He certainly should do so, according to Aristotle. "Fear and pity," says the philosopher, "may be awakened by appealing to the organs of sight; but they can also proceed from the connection of the events themselves; the latter is the more excellent method and that adopted by the best poets. For the story must be so constructed that it awakens pity and fear in him who merely listens to the relation of its events; such is the story of *Œdipus*, which only requires to be heard to arouse the above-mentioned passions. To produce this effect by means of the organs of sight, less art is required; and this should be left to the person who undertakes the representation of the play."

Shakespeare's plays are said to afford a curious proof of the dispensableness of scenic decorations. What plays, it is asked, stand more in need of the whole art of the decorator than these, with their constant interruptions and changes of scene? Yet there was a time when the stages, on which they were performed, consisted of

nothing but a curtain of some coarse material, which, when drawn up, disclosed the walls, which were quite bare or covered, at most, with matting or tapestry. Here there was nothing save the imagination to assist the actors in interpreting the piece and the spectators in comprehending it; yet, in spite of this, it is maintained that Shakespeare's plays were in those days more intelligible without scenery than they afterwards were with it.¹

If, then, the poet need not trouble himself about scenery; and if the same, even in cases where it would seem necessary, can be omitted without essentially detracting from his play: why should the fact of the French poets not having given us more touching plays be ascribed to the narrow and unfavourable construction of the theatre? The fault did not lie with the theatre; it lay with themselves.

And this is confirmed by experience. For to-day the French have a finer and more spacious stage; the spectators are no longer allowed upon it; the wings are kept clear; the decorator has free hands and can paint and construct whatever the poet requires of him. Yet where are those more passionate plays that one might have

¹ Cibber's *Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ire'and*, vol. ii. pp. 78, 79:—"Some have insinuated that fine scenes proved the ruin of acting. In the reign of Charles I. there was nothing more than a curtain of very coarse stuff, upon the drawing up of which the stage appeared, either with bare walls on the sides, coarsely matted, or covered with tapestry; so that for the place originally represented, and all the successive changes in which the poets of those times freely indulged themselves, there was nothing to help the spectator's understanding, or to assist the actor's performance, but bare imagination. The spirit and judgment of the actors supplied all deficiencies and made, as some would insinuate, plays more intelligible without scenes than they afterwards were with them."

expected to find? Does M. de Voltaire flatter himself that his "Semiramis" is one of them? There we have pomp and accessories in plenty, and a ghost into the bargain; and notwithstanding all this, I know of no colder play than his "Semiramis."

Now shall I be taken to mean by all this that no Frenchman is capable of writing a really passionate tragedy; that the volatile spirit of that nation is unequal to the task? I should be ashamed of entertaining such an opinion. Germany has not so far made herself ridiculous by any Bouhours; and I, for my part, have not the least inclination for the part. I am convinced that no nation in the world has been specially endowed with any mental gift superior to that of other nations. We often hear of the shrewd Englishman, the witty Frenchman. But who made this distinction? Certainly not Nature, for she distributes all things equally amongst all. There are as many witty Englishmen as witty Frenchmen, and as many shrewd Frenchmen as shrewd Englishmen, whilst the bulk of the people is neither one nor the other.

What, then, do I mean to convey? I merely want to say that the French have not yet got that which they might very well have—viz., true tragedy. And why have they not got it yet? In order to hit upon the correct reason, it would have been necessary for Voltaire to know himself a great deal better.

I mean that they have not got it because they believe that they have had it for a long time. And they are certainly strengthened in this belief by a quality which they possess beyond all other nations, but which is not a gift of nature—namely, their vanity.

As with single individuals, so it is with nations. Gottsched (it will readily be guessed why I mention him here) was in his young days held to be a poet, because at that time people did not know the difference between a mere versifier and a poet. Philosophy and criticism in due course made the distinction clear; and if Gottsched had but tried to keep abreast with the times, if he had but developed and rectified his ideas and his taste according to the ideas and the taste of the age, the versifier might perhaps have grown into a poet. But having so often heard himself styled the greatest poet, and being persuaded by his vanity that such was really the case, he neglected to do this. He could not possibly acquire what he already believed himself to possess; and the older he grew, the more obstinately and unblushingly he asserted his imagined superiority.

The same thing, it appears to me, has happened to the French. No sooner had Corneille raised their theatre a little out of the barbarous conditions in which he found it than they already deemed it close to perfection. Racine appeared to them to add the finishing touch; and from that time forth they never asked themselves for one moment (nor, in fact, had they ever done so) whether it was possible for any tragic poet to be more pathetic, more passionate, than Corneille and Racine. They took it for granted that such a thing was impossible, and all their succeeding poets had to confine their zeal to imitating the one or the other as closely as possible. For a hundred years they have thus deceived themselves and partly also their neighbours. And now let some one tell them so, and see what they will say!

Of the two, Corneille has done the greater harm and exercised the more baneful influence upon their tragic

poets. For Racine deceived them by his example only, but Corneille by his example and doctrines together.

The latter especially, which were accepted as oracles by the whole nation (with the exception of one or two pedants, a Hedelin, a Dacier, who, however, often did not themselves know what they wanted) and followed by all subsequent poets, have failed to produce anything but the most shallow, vapid, and untragical stuff. This I would undertake to prove piece by piece.

The rules of Aristotle are well calculated to produce the highest tragic effect. What does Corneille do with them? He brings them forward falsely and inaccurately; and finding them still too severe, he endeavours to discover in one or the other *quelque modération, quelque favorable interprétation*, and weakens and mutilates, misinterprets and frustrates every rule. And why? *Pour n'être pas obligés de condamner beaucoup de poèmes que nous avons vu réussir sur nos théâtres*; "so as not to be obliged to condemn many plays which have met with success upon our stage." A fine reason!

I will rapidly touch upon the chief points. Some of them I have already noticed; but for the sake of consistency I must reiterate them.

(1.) Aristotle says: tragedy should excite pity and fear. Corneille says: yes, but not necessarily both at the same time; we are quite satisfied with either one or the other, now with pity without fear, now with fear without pity. For else, where should I, the great Corneille, be with my Rodrigue and my Chimène? These good children arouse pity, very great pity, but hardly fear. Then again, where should I be, with my Cleopatra, my Prusias, my Phocas? Who can feel any pity for these wretches? And yet they awaken fear.

So thought Corneille, and the French thought it after him.

(2.) Aristotle says: tragedy should excite pity and fear; that is to say, both by means of one and the same person. Corneille says: if this can be so arranged, very good. But it is not absolutely necessary, and one would be perfectly justified in employing several persons to produce these two feelings, as I have done in my "Rodogune." Thus did Corneille, and the French follow his example.

(3.) Aristotle says: through the pity and the fear which are awakened by tragedy, our pity and our fear, and all our allied feelings, ought to be purified. Corneille knows nothing at all of this, and imagines that Aristotle meant to say that tragedy awakens our pity in order to awaken our fear, and that the latter will serve to purify in us those passions through which the object of our pity has been plunged into misfortune. I will not discuss the value of this aim; suffice it to say that it does not belong to Aristotle, and that, as Corneille assigned to his tragedies an entirely different aim, they could not but become entirely different works from those whence Aristotle had abstracted his theory; they had needs to become tragedies which were no true tragedies. And this applies not only to his plays, but to all the French tragedies, for their authors did not set themselves to follow the lines laid down by Aristotle, but those laid down by Corneille. I have already said that Dacier held that both aims could be combined; but by this very combination the former is weakened, and the tragedy falls short of its full effect. Dacier's conception of the former was, moreover, as I have shown, a very imperfect one, and it was therefore no wonder that he imagined

that the French tragedies of his time fulfilled the former aim rather than the latter. "Our tragedy," he says, "is fairly successful in the former aim of exciting and purifying pity and fear. But it rarely succeeds in the latter one, though that is the more important, and it purifies the other passions but little, or, since it ordinarily contains nothing but love-intrigues, if it purified any one of them, it would be the passion of love alone, whence it may be inferred that it is of very small value."¹ Now the truth is exactly the contrary. There are more French tragedies that do justice to the second aim than to the first. I know of several French plays which clearly expose the hurtful consequences resulting from one passion or another, and from which many good lessons may be gathered in regard to such a passion; but I know of none that excite my pity to the extent to which tragedy ought to excite it, and to which several Greek and English plays have conclusively shown me that tragedy can excite it. Some of the French tragedies are very fine and instructive works, and, in my opinion, very praiseworthy; only they are not tragedies. Their authors cannot have been other than very clever men; some of them deserve no mean rank among the poets: only they are not tragic poets; their Corneille and Racine, their Crébillon and Voltaire, have little or nothing of that which makes Sophocles a Sophocles, Euripides a Euripides, and Shakespeare a Shakespeare. These latter are seldom at variance with the essential demands of Aristotle; the former, on the contrary, are often so. For to proceed——

(4.) Aristotle says: in tragedy a good man must not be

¹ *Poet. d'Arist.*, chap. vi., Rem. 8.

plunged into misfortune without any fault on his part; for this would be too terrible. "Precisely," says Corneille, "such an event awakens more displeasure and hatred for him who causes the misfortune, than pity for him who is afflicted by it. The former feeling, which should not be the proper effect of tragedy, would consequently, unless treated with very great skill, stifle the latter feeling, which is the one that tragedy ought to produce. The spectator would go away dissatisfied, because too much wrath would be mingled with his pity, which latter would have satisfied him, if he could but have remained free from any other feelings. But," Corneille hastens to add; for he always has a "but" to follow,—“but if this cause is removed; if the poet constructs his play in such a way that the virtuous man who suffers can excite more pity for himself than hatred for him who causes his suffering; what then? Why, then,” he goes on to say, “I am of the opinion that no one should hesitate to represent even the most virtuous of men suffering upon the stage.” I am at a loss to understand how any one can deal with the philosopher in such a slipshod manner, and profess to understand him, whilst imputing opinions to him which he has never held. “A totally unmerited misfortune, which overtakes a good man,” says Aristotle, “is not suitable for tragedy, because it is terrible.” This “because,” which leads to the cause, is changed by Corneille into “in so far as,” merely a certain condition under which it ceases to be tragic. Aristotle says: it is altogether terrible, and for that very reason untragic. But Corneille says: it is untragic in so far as it is terrible. This terrible-ness is ascribed by Aristotle to the nature of the misfortune itself; but Corneille sets it down to the dis-

pleasure which it awakens towards him who is the cause of it. He does not, or will not, see that this terribleness is something quite different from this displeasure, and that even if the latter were entirely absent, the former might nevertheless be experienced to its fullest extent: it is enough for him that in the first place several of his plays seem to be justified by this *quid pro quo*; plays, which he deems so little at variance with the rules of Aristotle, that he actually has the boldness to imagine that, if Aristotle had but been acquainted with such plays, he would have modified his doctrines accordingly and gathered from them various methods by which the misfortune of a virtuous man may yet be rendered a fitting subject for tragedy. *En voici*, he says, *deux ou trois manières, que peut-être Aristote n'a su prévoir parcequ'on n'en voyait pas d'exemples sur les théâtres de son temps*. And whose are these examples? Whose else but his own? And what are those two or three methods? We will see at once. "The first," he says, "consists in representing a very virtuous person as being persecuted by a very vicious one, and yet escaping from his peril, in such a way that the vicious person is himself ensnared by it. This is the case in 'Rodogune' and in 'Heraclius'; and it would have been quite intolerable had Antiochus and Rodogune perished in the first-mentioned play, and Heraclius, Pulcheria and Martian in the second, and Cleopatra and Phocas been left to triumph. The sufferings of the former persons awaken a feeling of pity which our hatred for their persecutors is incapable of stifling, for we keep on hoping that some happy circumstance may intervene to save them from ruin." It is absurd of Corneille to try and make out that Aristotle was unacquainted with this method. On the contrary, he

was so well acquainted with it that, if he did not condemn it altogether, he at any rate explicitly declared it to be more suitable for comedy than for tragedy. How could Corneille have forgotten this? But so it is with all who start by assuming their cause to be the cause of truth. Moreover, strictly speaking, this method does not apply to the case in point at all. For it would not have the effect of rendering the virtuous man unfortunate, but would merely lead him along the road to misfortune, and this of itself might perhaps arouse sympathetic anxiety on his behalf, but it would not be terrible.

Now for the second method. "It may also happen," says Corneille, "that a very virtuous man is persecuted and ruined at the instigation of another who is not so vicious as to wholly deserve our displeasure, and whose persecution of the virtuous man reveals more weakness than wickedness. When Felix causes the downfall of his son-in-law Polyeucte, he is prompted not so much by indignant rage against the Christians, which would render him detestable in our eyes, as by servile fear, which hinders him from saving him in the presence of Severus, by whose hatred and vengeance he is awed. Some displeasure will doubtless be awakened against Felix; his conduct will be blamed; yet this displeasure will not outweigh the pity which we entertain for Polyeucte, nor will it prevent his wonderful conversion at the end of the play from reinstating him in the good graces of the spectators." I suppose there have been bunglers in tragedy at all times and even in Athens. Why then should not Aristotle have been acquainted with a play of similar construction, from which he could draw the same conclusions as Corneille? What nonsense! In plays of this kind, timid, vacillating and undecided

characters, like Felix, are but an additional fault, for they lend them a certain coldness and repulsiveness on the one hand, without in the least detracting from their terribleness on the other. For, as already mentioned, the terrible does not consist in the displeasure or aversion which they excite, but in the misfortune itself which afflicts the innocent sufferers. The misfortune is in any case equally undeserved, be the persecutors wicked or weak, be their conduct premeditated or unpremeditated. The thought that there may be persons who, from no fault of their own, meet with misfortunes, is in itself a terrible one. And whereas the Pagans tried to banish this terrible thought as much as possible, we endeavour to retain it? We try to derive pleasure from plays that confirm it? We, whom religion and common sense should have convinced that it is as erroneous as it is blasphemous?

The same would no doubt apply to the third method, had not Corneille himself forgotten to state which this is.

(5.) Aristotle's remarks upon the unfitness of an entirely vicious person to form a tragic hero, inasmuch as his misfortunes would awaken neither pity nor fear, are likewise modified by Corneille. Pity, he tells us, a person of that sort could not excite, but he might very well arouse fear. For although none of the spectators deemed themselves capable of acquiring his vices, and consequently liable to suffer his misfortune in its entirety; yet each one of them might be the victim of some fault more or less akin to one or other of these vices, and would in that case derive a salutary corrective from a fear of its consequences, which, though proportionately less serious, would still be unfortunate. But this argument is based upon the false conception which Corneille formed of

fear and of the purification of those passions which are awakened by tragedy. It contradicts itself; for, as I have already pointed out, the excitation of pity is inseparable from the excitation of fear, and if it were possible for a villain to excite our fear, he must of necessity excite our pity also. But since, as Corneille himself admits, he cannot do the latter, he can neither do the former; and he therefore does not serve in the least to fulfil the aim of tragedy. Aristotle even considers him less fitted to do so than the entirely virtuous man; for he clearly maintains that, failing a hero who combines good and bad qualities equally, it is better to choose a good one than a bad one. The reason is very simple; a man may be very good, and yet possess more faults than one or commit more errors than one, whereby he is plunged into an immeasurable misfortune which fills us with pity and sorrow, without being in the least terrible, because it is the natural consequence of his errors. What Du Bos¹ says about the employment of vicious persons in tragedy is not what Corneille means. Du Bos would only allow them as subsidiary characters, as merely instrumental in rendering the chief characters less culpable by serving as foils to them. Corneille, on the other hand, would make them the main objects of interest, as he has shown us in "Rodogune"; and it is the latter which is at variance with the aim of tragedy, not the former. Du Bos adds the very true remark that the misfortunes of these subsidiary villains make no impression upon us. "In 'Britannicus,'" he says, "we scarcely notice the death of Narcissus." And for this very reason the poet should avoid these characters as far as possible. For if their misfortunes do not directly

¹ *Réflexions cr.*, t. i., sec. xv.

further the aim of tragedy; if they are merely employed by the poet as instruments to enable him the better to achieve that aim in other characters: it cannot be denied that a play would be all the better, if it produced the same effect without their aid. The simpler a machine, the fewer its springs and wheels and weights, the more perfect it will be.

(6.) And lastly, as regards the misconception of the first and most essential quality demanded by Aristotle in the moral character of tragic personages. Their morals must be good. "Good?" says Corneille. "Why, if *good* here means the same as *virtuous*, what becomes of the majority of ancient and modern tragedies which abound in characters, which if not absolutely bad and vicious, are yet endowed with a weakness that is hardly compatible with virtue?" He is especially alarmed for the safety of Cleopatra in his "Rodogune." So he refuses to regard the goodness demanded by Aristotle as moral goodness; it must be some other kind of goodness, compatible with moral badness as well as with moral goodness. But what Aristotle means is purely moral goodness; only virtuous persons and persons who, under certain circumstances, display moral virtue, are not one and the same thing to him. Corneille, in short, connects the word "moral" with an entirely false idea, and he has altogether failed to grasp the *proæresis*, through which alone, according to our philosopher, free actions become moral or immoral. I cannot here furnish an exhaustive proof of any assertion; in order to clearly understand it, one must be familiar with the connection and syllogistic sequence of all the ideas propounded by the Greek critic. I will therefore defer

it until another occasion; all that I have to show at present is that Corneille, having missed the proper path, has chosen a very disastrous one instead. The latter leads him to the following conclusion: that by moral goodness Aristotle understood the brilliant and lofty character of some inclination, whether praiseworthy or reprehensible, which might either be the peculiar attribute of the person introduced, or else be skilfully imparted to that person; *le caractère brillant et élevé d'une habitude vertueuse ou criminelle, selon qu'elle est propre et convenable à la personne qu'on introduit.* "Cleopatra in 'Rodogune,'" he says, "is a thoroughly bad person; there is no murder that she fears to commit, if it but serve to maintain her upon the throne, which is dearer to her than anything else in the world; so keen is her love of dominion. But all her crimes are connected with a certain greatness of soul, which is of itself so impressive that, whilst we condemn her actions, we cannot but admire the source from which they originate. I would say the same thing of the Liar. Lying is unquestionably a vicious habit; but Dorante gives vent to his lies with such presence of mind, with such vivacity, that this defect almost appeals in his favour, and the spectators are bound to admit that the ability to tell such lies is a vice whereof no fool could be capable." Corneille could, indeed, hardly have arrived at a more wretched conclusion! Carry it into execution and you will find that all the truth, the illusion and the moral benefit of tragedy vanish entirely. For virtue, which is ever modest and simple, is, by assuming that brilliant character, rendered vain and romantic, whilst vice is thereby shrouded with a certain glamour which always dazzles us, from whichever point of view we regard it. It is absurd to try to employ

the mere evil consequences of a vice as a deterrent, if its inner hideousness is kept out of sight. The consequences are accidental, and experience shows us that they are as often favourable as unfavourable. This refers to the purification of the passions, as understood by Corneille. As I imagine it, as Aristotle explained it, it has nothing whatever to do with that deceptive brilliance. The false foil which is by this means given to vice causes us to recognise perfections where none exist, and to feel pity where we should feel none. Dacier, it is true, has already contradicted this explanation, but for less cogent reasons; and the one which he, together with Père Le Bossu, adopts in its place, is not far from being quite as disadvantageous to the poetical perfection of a play. For, according to him, the statement, that the morals should be good, means no more than that they should be clearly defined, *qu'elles soient bien marquées*. This is a rule which, if correctly taken, is, in its proper place, worthy of careful attention on the part of the dramatist. From the French models it would unfortunately appear that *clearly defined* has been taken to mean the same as *strongly defined*. The expression has been overcharged, pressure added to pressure, until the persons characterised have been transformed into personified characters, and vicious or virtuous human beings into haggard skeletons of vice or virtue.

THE EDUCATION OF THE
HUMAN RACE.

1780.

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“Hæc omnia inde esse in quibusdam vera, unde in quibusdam falsa sunt.”—AUGUSTINUS.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE first half of this work I have already published in my *Contributions*. I am now in a position to add the remaining portion.

The author is supposed therein to be stationed upon a hill, whence he can command a view extending somewhat beyond the prescribed course of this his present day.

Yet he calls aside from his path no hastening wanderer, whose sole wish it is to speedily reach his night-quarters. He does not demand that the view, by which he himself is transported, should also delight the eyes of all others.

And therefore, methinks, one could well let him stand and gaze in wonder where he is.

If from the immeasurable distance, which the soft glow of the evening sky neither conceals from, nor reveals entirely to, his gaze, he brought away with him but one indication, for which I have oft been at a loss!

I mean this one. Why should we not in all positive Religions see nothing other than the order in which the

human understanding everywhere solely and by itself is developed and must continue to develop, rather than either smile or carp at any one of them? This our scorn, this our hatred, nothing in the best of worlds has deserved; and shall the Religions alone, then, deserve it? As though God had a hand in everything save in our errors!

THE EDUCATION OF THE HUMAN RACE.

1. WHAT Education is to the individual, Revelation is to the whole human race.

2. Education is Revelation imparted to the individual; and Revelation is Education, which has been, and is still being, imparted to the human race.

3. Whether Education, looked at from this point of view, can be of any value in Pedagogy, it is not my purpose here to inquire. But in Theology it can certainly be of very great value and remove many difficulties, if Revelation is looked upon as an Education of the human race.

4. Education gives to the individual nothing which he could not attain by his own efforts; it gives him that which he could attain by himself, only more quickly and more easily. In like manner Revelation imparts to the human race nothing which the human understanding, if left to itself, could not also discover; only it gives, and continues to give, to it the most important of these things sooner than they would otherwise be attained.

5. And just as in Education it is by no means a matter of indifference in what order the powers in the individual are developed; as it cannot impart everything to him at once: so God had to observe, in his Revelation, a certain order, a certain measure.

6. The first man was forthwith endowed with the idea

of a *single* God; but such an idea, since it was not acquired by himself, but imparted to him, could not long retain its original clearness. As soon as the human understanding, left to itself, began to exercise its powers upon him, it resolved the single Infinite in several more finite, and gave to each of these parts a distinctive sign.

7. The natural outcome of this was polytheism and idolatry. And who knows for how many millions of years the human understanding would have strayed along these paths of error—notwithstanding that a few individuals have everywhere and at all times recognised that they were paths of error—had it not pleased God by a fresh impulse to give it a new and a better direction!

8. As, however, He neither could nor would reveal Himself again to any *single individual*, He chose a *single people* for his especial education; and for this purpose He selected the most uncivilised, the most degenerate people, that He might begin with them at the very beginning.

9. This was the Israelitish people, of whom it is not even known what system of worship they had in Egypt. For in the worship of the Egyptians, slaves so despised as they were could not take part, and the God of their fathers had fallen into entire oblivion.

10. It may be that the Egyptians had expressly denied them any God, all Gods; that they had forced them into the belief that they had no God, no Gods; that it was only the privilege of the better class of Egyptians to have a God, or Gods; and that they did all this in order that they might tyrannise over them with so much greater semblance of equity.

Do the Christians of to-day act very differently from this towards their slaves?

11. To this rough people, then, God in the beginning made himself known merely as the God of their fathers, that they might first become acquainted and familiarised with the idea of a God who of right also belonged to them.

12. By means of the miracles, by which He led them out of Egypt and brought them into Canaan, He next convinced them that He was more powerful than any other god.

13. And by accustoming them to the idea that He was the mightiest of all Gods—which *One* alone can be—He gradually prepared them for the conception of the *Divine Unity*.

14. Yet how far this conception of the Divine Unity fell short of the true transcendental conception of a single God, which the understanding at so much later a period first learnt to form with certainty from the conception of the Infinite!

15. A long time had to elapse ere the people could attain to the true conception of the Divine Unity;—though perhaps the more advanced among them already more or less approached it,—and this was the only true reason why they so often abandoned their own God and sought for the single God—*i.e.*, the most powerful among the Gods of other nations.

16. But what *moral* training was a people so uncultivated, so incapable of abstract thought, so backward as yet in its infancy, capable of receiving? None other than that which corresponds to the age of infancy: training by means of direct punishments and rewards in this life.

17. Here again Education and Revelation coincide. God could as yet give his people no other religion, no

other law but one, the observance or non-observance of which should make them hope for, or fear, happiness, or unhappiness, here on earth. For beyond this life they saw nothing. They knew of no immortality of the soul; they yearned after no future life. Now, had God revealed these things to them while their understanding was as yet unable to perfectly comprehend them, He would have committed the mistake of the vain pedagogue, who prefers to hasten on his pupil and thus be enabled to boast of him, rather than to instruct him thoroughly.

18. Yet to what purpose, it will be asked, was this Education of so rough a people, a people with which God had to start from the very beginning? I answer: That in the course of time some individual members thereof might the more safely become the Educators of all other nations. In them He educated the future educators of the human race. These were Jews; they could only be Jews, could only come from a nation thus educated.

19. Furthermore, when the child, used to chastisements and caresses, had grown up and already reached years of discretion, its Father suddenly turned it out of doors; and now it suddenly became alive to the good things which it had received, but not appreciated, in its Father's house.

20. Whilst God was leading his chosen people through all the stages of an infant education, the other nations of the earth had gone their way at the appearance of the light of reason. Most of them had fallen far behind the chosen people; only a few had advanced beyond it. The same thing happens with children who are allowed to grow up by themselves; many remain quite unedu-

cated, while some educate themselves to a surprising degree.

21. But as these more fortunate few in nowise furnish a proof against the value and necessity of Education, so neither do the few pagan nations, who even in the recognition of a God seemed until now to be in advance of the chosen nation, prove anything against Revelation. The child of Education begins with slow but sure steps, and it is long ere it overtakes some more happily organised child of nature ; but it does overtake it in the end, and will thenceforth be nevermore overtaken by the latter.

22. In like manner : That—leaving aside the doctrine of the Unity of God, which, in the books of the Old Testament, is found and is not found,—that, I say, at any rate the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the corresponding doctrine of punishment and rewards in a future life are not to be found there, proves just as little against the divine origin of these books. There may, notwithstanding this, be ample justification for all the miracles and prophecies contained therein. For let us assume that those doctrines were not only *not to be found* there, but that they were *not even true*; let us assume that there were no future in store for mankind after this life: would the proof of the existence of God be in any way lessened thereby? Would it on this account be any the less open to God, would it any the less befit him, to lend his direct guidance to the temporal destiny of any nation of this transient race? The miracles which He wrought for the Jews, the prophecies which He caused them to record, were not meant for those few mortal Jews alone, in whose time they occurred and were recorded; He intended them for the whole Jewish

people, and then for the whole human race, which shall perhaps endure here on earth unto eternity, even though each individual Jew, each individual human being, perish for ever.

23. Once more: the absence of such doctrines in the writings of the Old Testament proves nought against their Divineness. Moses was appointed by God although the sanction of his law extended over this life only. For why should it extend further? He was only sent to the *Israelitish* nation, to the Israelitish nation *of that time*; and his appointed mission fully corresponded to the knowledge, capacities, and inclinations of this Israelitish nation *of that time*; as also to the destiny of the *one to come*. That is enough.

24. So far and no further should *Warburton* have gone. But that learned man overshot the mark; not content with holding that the absence of those doctrines in nowise disproved the Divine mission of Moses, he went so far as to believe that their very absence furnished a proof in favour of it. And if he had only tried to draw this proof from the fitness of such a law for such a people. But no; he found refuge in a Miracle extending uninterruptedly from Moses to Christ, according to which God made each single Jew just as happy, or unhappy, as his obedience, or disobedience, to the law deserved. This miracle, he has it, replaced the absence of those doctrines without which no state can continue to exist, and this substitution proves the very thing which such absence appeared, at first sight, to deny.

25. What a good thing it was that *Warburton* could in nowise strengthen, could by no means render probable, this perpetual miracle, in which he saw the essence of Israelitish theocracy! For had he been able to do

so,—he would indeed have rendered the difficulty insoluble; for me, at any rate. For that which should restore the divineness of the mission of Moses, would have rendered doubtful the very thing which God, if He could not reveal it at that time, at least did not wish to make more difficult.

26. I will explain myself by the counterpart of Revelation. An elementary book for children may well pass over in silence this or that important part of the science or art whereof it treats, if the teacher concludes that the intelligence of the children, for whom he writes, is not yet able to grasp it. It must, however, on no account contain anything that might shut them off, or turn them aside from the path to those important points which have been withheld. Nay, more: every approach to those points must be carefully left open; and to lead the children away from even a single one of these approaches to the same, or cause them not to reach them till later, would of itself make the incompleteness of the elementary book an essential fault in it.

27. It was well, therefore, that in the writings of the Old Testament, those elementary books of the rough Israelitish people, unskilled in thinking, no mention was made of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and of a future reward. But it was necessary that they should on no account contain anything which might delay, however little, the way to this great Truth, for the people for whom they were written. And what, in short, would have *delayed* it more than if promises of that wonderful reward in this life had therein been made, and made by Him who promised nought that He does not fulfil?

28. For although the unequal distribution of the good things of this life, wherein virtue and vice appear to be

so little taken into account, does not exactly afford the strongest proof in favour of the immortality of the soul and of a life to come, whereby that problem would be solved, yet this much is certain, that without that problem the human understanding would not for a long time—would perhaps never—have arrived at better and surer proofs. For what should impel it to seek those better proofs? Mere curiosity?

29. This or that Israelite may certainly have applied the Divine promises and threats, which referred to the state as a whole, to each individual member of the same, firmly believing that whosoever was faithful would also be happy, and that whosoever was or became unhappy was suffering the penalty of his misdeeds; which penalty would forthwith be changed into a blessing, as soon as he ceased from those misdeeds. Such a man appears to have been he that wrote the book of Job, for it is planned altogether in this spirit.

30. Daily experience could not possibly, however, have strengthened this belief; and, had the people gained this experience, the recognition and acceptance of a Truth with which they were as yet unfamiliar, would have been lost to them *for ever*. For if the man of faith was absolutely happy, and it was part of his happiness that his tranquillity was not disturbed by any dreadful thoughts of death, and that death came to him when he had reached old age, and was *weary of life*: how could he yearn after another life? And how could he ponder over a thing for which he did not yearn? But if the man of faith did not ponder over it, who would? The evil-doer, who suffered the penalty of his misdeeds, and who, if he wished himself out of this life, would gladly have renounced any other?

31. It mattered much less whether this or that Israelite, because the law did not refer to it, straightway and explicitly denied the immortality of the soul and a future reward. The denial of a single individual—even though he had been a Solomon—could not have checked the progress of the common intelligence; and this was in itself already a proof that the people had made a great stride in the direction of Truth. For single individuals deny only that which the many submit to consideration; and to submit to consideration that which has never before furnished food for reflection, is half the way to Knowledge.

32. Let us also acknowledge that it is the very heroism of obedience to observe the laws of God simply because they are His laws, and not because He has here and there promised to reward those who obey Him; to observe them, even though there be no hope whatsoever of a future reward, and not even absolute certainty of one on earth.

33. Should not a people brought up in this heroic obedience towards God be destined, be competent, before all others, to execute His especial purposes? If the soldier, who blindly obeys his leader, be but also convinced of the latter's wisdom and prudence, what may not such a leader undertake to do with him?

34. Hitherto the Jewish people had honoured in their Jehovah the most powerful, rather than the wisest of all Gods; hitherto they had feared, rather than loved, Him as a jealous God. This, again, proves that the conceptions which they had of their highest single God were not precisely those which we should have of God. The time had now come for these their conceptions to be expanded, ennobled, and rectified; and for this purpose

God availed Himself of an entirely natural means, a better and juster standard by which the opportunity of estimating Him was accorded to them.

35. Whereas hitherto they had estimated Him only in comparison with the wretched idols of the small barbarous nations around them, with whom they lived in a state of continuous jealousy, they now began, in their captivity under the wise Persian, to compare Him with the supreme Being, as recognised and honoured by a superior intelligence.

36. Revelation had guided their understanding, and now their understanding suddenly enlightened the Revelation.

37. This was the first mutual service which they rendered to each other; and to the Author of both, such a mutual influence is the less unbefitting, inasmuch as, without it, one of the two would be superfluous.

38. The child, sent abroad, saw other children who had greater knowledge and who lived a more dignified life; and he asked himself in shame, Why do not I also know that? Why do not I also live thus? Should not I too, in my father's house, have been taught, nay, made, to do so? Then he again searches out his elementary books, long since cast aside in disgust, in order to throw the blame on these. But behold, he recognises that the fault lies not with the books, that it is entirely his own fault that he had not long ago learnt the same knowledge, lived the same life.

39. As the Jews by this time, owing to the superiority of Persian teaching, learnt to recognise in their Jehovah not merely the greatest of all national gods, but God Himself; as in their sacred writings, which were again

brought to light, they could find Him and demonstrate Him to others to be such, the more so as He therein appeared as such; as they expressed, or at any rate were, in these writings, taught to feel just as great an aversion to all sensual representations of Him as even the Persians had, what wonder that in the eyes of Cyrus they found favour by a form of worship in which, although he considered it to be far inferior to pure Sabaism, he yet recognised a great advance upon the coarse idolatries that had taken its place in the forsaken land of the Jews?

40. Thus enlightened upon their own unrecognised treasures, they returned and became an entirely different people, whose first care it was to make this enlightenment a lasting one among themselves. Soon all thoughts of apostasy and idolatry among them disappeared. For one may become unfaithful to a national God, but never to God himself, when once one has learnt to know Him.

41. The theologians have attempted to explain in various ways this total change which came over the Jewish people; and one who has clearly pointed out the inadequacy of all these various explanations ultimately endeavoured to show that the true cause thereof lay in "the evident fulfilment of the prophecies, uttered by word of mouth and recorded in writing, upon the Babylonian Captivity and the return from the same." But this explanation, too, can only be true in so far as it presupposes those conceptions of God, which were now ennobled for the first time. The Jews must only now have begun to recognise the fact that to work miracles and prophesy regarding the future belongs to God alone. This power they had formerly also attributed to the false

idols; and it was in consequence of this that miracles and prophecies had hitherto made so feeble and transitory an impression upon them.

42. During their intercourse with the Chaldæans and Persians, too, the Jews had doubtless become more acquainted with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. They grew to be still further familiarised with it in the schools of the Greek philosophers in Egypt.

43. But this doctrine did not occupy the same position, in regard to their sacred writings, as the doctrine of the Unity and Attributes of God; the sensual nation had neglected to look for the former in those writings, whereas it had been their desire to find the latter; and for this latter a *preparatory discipline* had been necessary, and consequently mere *allusions* and *hints* had there been given to them. Therefore the belief in the immortality of the soul could in the natural order of things never become the belief of the entire people; it was, and continued to remain, the belief only of a certain sect of the same.

44. What I have termed a *preparatory discipline* for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul would be afforded by, for example, the divine threat to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children even unto the third and fourth generation. This accustomed the fathers to live, in their thoughts, with their remotest descendants, and to feel beforehand the misfortunes which they had brought upon these innocent ones.

45. An *allusion* I call that which should only excite curiosity and provoke a question, as, for instance, the oft-recurring phrase, "*to be gathered to one's fathers*," used instead of "to die."

46. By a *hint* I mean that which already contains

some kind of germ, from which the truth hitherto concealed therein may be developed. Such a one was Christ's conclusion regarding the appellation: "*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*" This hint might certainly, it appears to me, be developed into a strong proof.

47. It is in such preparatory discipline, allusions, and hints that the *positive* perfection of an elementary book consists; just as the above-mentioned feature of not rendering the path to those truths which were hitherto concealed, more difficult, or barring it altogether, was its *negative* perfection.

48. Add to this the representation and the style.

1. The representation of abstract truths, difficult to grasp, in the form of allegories and instructive single instances which are related as having actually occurred. Such are the Creation, represented in the form of breaking day; the origin of evil, in the story of the forbidden fruit; the origin of many tongues, in the story of the Tower of Babel; and so forth.

49. 2. The style. Now plain, and simple, now poetical, teeming with tautologous phrases which test and strengthen the intellect by appearing in some cases to express different things, whereas they in reality mean the same thing, and in others, again, to say the same thing, whereas they have, or can have, quite different meanings underlying them.

50. Thus you have here all the advantages of an elementary book for a childish nation as well as for children.

51. But every elementary book is suited only to a certain age. It is injurious for a child that has outgrown it to continue using it. For to be able to do this in even a moderately useful manner, the teacher must

read into it more than it actually contains; he must give it more than it should have; he must seek and make too many allusions and hints, pick out the allegories too carefully, cite examples too fully, and turn and twist the words too much. This will give the child a diminutive, distorted, and quibbling understanding, will make him fond of mystery and superstition, and will inspire him with contempt for all that is clear and intelligible.

52. In the same way the Rabbins treated their sacred Books. And thus they imparted the same character to the spirit of their nation.

53. A better teacher had to come and take the exhausted elementary book away from the child. Christ came.

54. That section of the human race, which it had been God's purpose to include in *one* system of Education,—and it had been His purpose to include in *one* system only that section which was already united in itself by ties of language, action, government, and other natural and political relations,—was now ripe for the second great step in Education.

55. That is to say, this section of the human race had, by exercising their understanding, developed it to such an extent that for their moral actions they required and could act upon nobler and worthier incentives than those temporal rewards and punishments which had hitherto determined their conduct. The child grows into a boy; sweetmeats and playthings give place to a budding desire to enjoy the same measure of freedom, honour, and happiness as that which he discerns in his elder brothers.

56. The better part of that portion of the human race had long been accustomed to be ruled by a *shadow* of such nobler incentives. The Greek and the Roman did

everything in their power to continue to live, after this life in the memory of their fellow-citizens.

57. It was time that men's actions should be influenced by another and a *true* life, to be attained after the present.

58. And thus Christ became the first *trustworthy*, *practical* teacher of the immortality of the soul.

59. He was the first *trustworthy* teacher. Trustworthy on account of the prophecies which seemed to be fulfilled in Him; trustworthy on account of the miracles which He wrought; trustworthy on account of His own resurrection after a death by which He had set a seal to His doctrine. Whether we can to-day still prove this resurrection and these miracles, I forbear to say. I must likewise leave aside the question of the personality of Christ. All this may at that time have been of importance for the *acceptance* of His teaching; to-day it no longer affects our recognition of the truth of it to the same extent.

60. He was the first *practical* teacher. For to suspect, to wish, to believe, the immortality of the soul to be a philosophical speculation, is one thing; to shape one's inward and outward conduct in accordance therewith, is another.

61. This, at any rate, Christ first taught us. For although among some nations it was already before His time an accepted belief that evil actions would be punished in the life to come, yet this only applied to such actions as were injurious to the civil community, and which consequently were already punished by that community. It was reserved for Him alone to enjoin an inner purity of heart in view of a future life.

62. His disciples faithfully propagated this doctrine. And had their merit consisted only in the fact that they

had widely circulated among several nations that truth which Christ appeared to have originally intended for the Jews alone, this would of itself justify their being included among the healers and benefactors of the human race.

63. And how could they do otherwise than combine, with this *one* great doctrine, others of which the truth was less evident, and the benefit less important? Let us not blame them on that account, but rather inquire earnestly whether a new *impulse* was not given to the human understanding even by these added doctrines.

64. Experience, at any rate, clearly proves that the writings of the New Testament, in which these doctrines were afterwards preserved, have constituted, and still constitute, a second and better elementary book for the human race.

65. During 1700 years they have occupied and enlightened the human understanding more than all other books, even though it be only by means of the light which the human understanding has itself cast upon them.

66. By no possibility could any other book have become as well known among nations so different from one another; nor can it be at all denied that modes of thought so entirely dissimilar, by being applied to the Book in question, tended to develop the human understanding more than if each nation had possessed a special elementary book of its own.

67. It was moreover of the highest importance that for a certain length of time every nation should look upon this Book as the *Non plus ultra* of its knowledge. In like manner, also, a boy must at first look upon his elementary book in this light, lest, in his impatience to

have done with it, he hasten to other matters for which he has as yet laid no foundation.

68. And this is still to-day of the highest importance:—Take heed, thou more able scholar, who dost stamp and rage at the last page of this elementary book; take heed, I say, lest thy weaker fellow-pupils perceive what thou dost suspect or hast already begun to see.

69. Until they have overtaken thee, these weaker fellow-pupils, turn rather once more to this elementary book and examine whether that which thou deemest only turns of method, makeshifts of dialectic, is not something better.

70. In the childhood of the human race thou hast seen, by the doctrine of the Unity of God, that He directly reveals, or sanctions and introduces, mere truths of reason also; and that mere truths of reason are for a certain length of time taught as directly revealed truths, so that they may be the more speedily spread, and the more soundly inculcated.

71. In the boyhood of the human race thou learnest the same thing from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This doctrine is *preached* as a Revelation, in the second and better elementary book, and not *taught* as the result of human reasoning.

72. Just as we no longer require the Old Testament to convince ourselves of the Unity of God; just as we are now gradually beginning, without the New Testament also, to be able to convince ourselves of the immortality of the soul: might not further truths of this nature be foreshadowed in the latter Book,—truths to be regarded as Revelations until such time as the understanding may learn to distinguish them from, and combine them with, those other truths which it has already discovered?

73. For example: the Doctrine of the Trinity. How if this doctrine were at last to place the human understanding, after endless wanderings to the right and to the left, in the way to recognise that God, in the sense in which finite things are *One*, cannot possibly be *One*; and that His Unity must be a transcendental Unity, which does not exclude a kind of plurality? Must not God at least have the most perfect conception of himself —*i.e.*, a conception which includes all that is contained within Himself? But would it include all that is contained within Himself if it were merely a conception, merely a possibility of His *necessary reality*, as also of His remaining attributes? This possibility exhausts the essence of His remaining attributes; but does it also exhaust that of His necessary reality? I think not. Consequently God must either have no perfect conception of Himself, or else this perfect conception must of necessity be just as real as He is Himself; and so on. My reflection in a mirror is indeed nothing more than an empty conception or representation of myself; for it only contains that part of me from which the light falls upon its surface. But if this reflection contained *everything*, without exception, that forms part of myself, would it still be nothing more than an empty representation? would it not rather be a true duplication of myself? If I believe that in God I recognise a similar duplication, it is more probable that these words do not adequately express my idea, than that I am in error; and it still remains irrefutable that those who would popularise that idea, could hardly have given it a more fitting and comprehensible expression than by introducing the name of a *Son*, whom God has begotten from eternity.

74. And the Doctrine of Original Sin. How if every-

thing led us to the final conclusion that man on the *first and lowest* rung of humanity could nowise have exercised such control over his actions as to render him capable of obeying moral laws?

75. And the Doctrine of the Atonement of the Son. How if finally everything forced us into the belief that God, notwithstanding this original inability on the part of man, yet chose to give unto him moral laws and to forgive him all his transgressions in consideration of His *Son*—*i.e.*, in consideration of the self-contained extent of all His perfections, against and in which every imperfection of the individual disappears—rather than withhold from him those moral laws, and thus exclude him from all moral bliss, which the absence of them would render inconceivable?

76. Let it not be urged that such quibbles concerning the mysteries of Religion are forbidden. The word "mystery" bore, in the early ages of Christianity, an entirely different meaning from that which we to-day attach to it; and it is absolutely necessary that revealed truths should be converted into truths of reason if they are to benefit the human race. When they were revealed, they were not as yet truths of reason; but they were revealed in order to become such. They were like the *solution* which the arithmetician gives to his pupils beforehand, that in reckoning they may be to some extent guided thereby. Were the pupils to rest content with the *solution* given to them beforehand, they would never learn arithmetic, and would with difficulty attain the end for the sake of which the good master gives them a clue to their work.

77. And why may not we in like manner, by means of a Religion whose historic truth, if you will, appears so

doubtful, be nevertheless led to clearer and better ideas of the Divine essence, of our own nature, and of our relations to God: ideas to which the human understanding would of itself never have attained?

78. It is not true that speculation upon these matters has ever wrought evil or proved detrimental to the social community. Not against such speculation must this charge be levelled, but against the folly and tyranny employed to direct its course and to grudge those persons who made speculations for themselves, the use of them.

79. On the contrary, such speculations—be the result in individual instances what it may—indisputably form the *soundest* training for the human understanding in general, so long as the human heart is at best only capable of loving virtue for the sake of its eternal blessed rewards.

80. For so long as the human heart retains this selfishness, any attempt to train the mind also by means of that which only appertains to our physical requirements, would blunt it rather than sharpen it. It must be exercised upon spiritual subjects, if it is to attain its full enlightenment and to effect that purification of the heart which makes us capable of loving virtue for its own sake.

81. Or is the human race never to reach these the highest steps of enlightenment and purification? Never?

82. Never? Let me not think of such blasphemy, O Beneficent One! In the race, as in the individual, Education has its appointed *goal*. What is trained, is trained to *something*.

83. The flattering prospects which are laid open to the youth; the honour, the prosperity, mirrored before him: what are these but the means of making him a man, who,

even when these prospects of honour and prosperity shall have fallen away, may yet be capable of doing his duty?

84. Human Education aims at this, and yet Divine Education will not reach so far? What art succeeds in achieving with the individual, Nature will not succeed in achieving with the race? Blasphemy! Blasphemy!

85. No; it will come, it will certainly come, the time of consummation, when man, however firmly his mind is convinced of an ever better future, will yet have no need to borrow motives for his conduct from that future. For he will do what is right because it is right, and not because arbitrary rewards are attached to it, which were merely intended to attract and strengthen his wandering attention, so that he might recognise its inward better rewards.

86. It will certainly come, the time of this *new eternal Gospel*, which is promised us already in the elementary books of the New Covenant.

87. It may indeed be that certain visionaries had already in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries caught a glimpse of this new eternal Gospel, and that their error merely lay in predicting for it so speedy an advent.

88. It may be that their *threefold age of the world* was not by any means an idle fancy; and it was assuredly with no evil purpose that they taught that the New Covenant must become *antiquated*, as the Old Covenant had already done. They moreover retained throughout the same economy of the same God; throughout—to use my own words—the same plan for the universal Education of the human race.

89. But they hastened it too much, believing that they could, at one stroke, without enlightenment, without

preparation, change their contemporaries, who had scarcely outgrown their infancy, into men worthy of their *third age*!

90. This it is which makes them visionaries. The visionary often has surprisingly true glimpses of the future, only he cannot await its coming. He wants it to be hastened, and to be hastened by himself. What Nature requires thousands of years to accomplish, he expects to achieve in the brief moment of his existence. For what will it avail him if that which he recognises as the better does not become so during his lifetime? Will he return? Does he imagine that he will do so? It is strange that this fanaticism ceases any longer to attract even the fanatics!

91. Advance at thy imperceptible pace, eternal Providence! But let me not, because it is imperceptible, despair of thee! Let me not despair of thee even if thy steps should seem to me to go backwards! It is not true that the shortest line is always the straight one.

92. On thy eternal path thou hast to carry along so much with thee, to take so many steps aside! What if it were as good as proved that that great, slowly-turning wheel, which carries the race nearer to its perfection, is set in motion only by smaller and quicker wheels, each of which revolves for that very purpose?

93. It is nothing else. That very groove, along which the race advances towards its perfection, must first have been traversed by each individual human being, one sooner, the other later. "Must have been traversed in one and the same lifetime? Can a man be in one and the same lifetime a sensual Jew and a spiritual Christian? Can he pass through both of these states in one and the same lifetime?"

94. Doubtless he cannot. But why may not each individual human being have existed more than once in this world?

95. Is this hypothesis so ridiculous for the sole reason that it is the oldest; because the human understanding had, before the sophistry of the schools had wrought a distracting and weakening influence upon it, at once adopted that hypothesis?

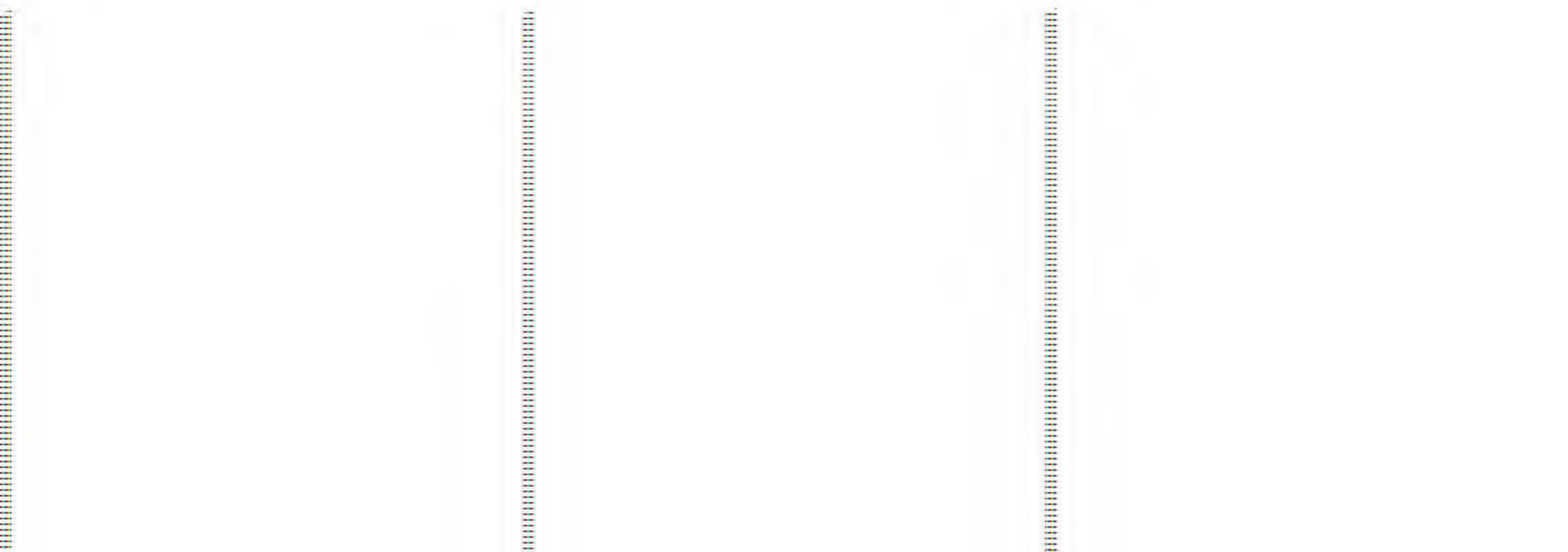
96. Why may not I myself here on earth have at one time already passed through all the stages towards my perfection, which temporal rewards and penalties alone can bring to man?

97. And at another time all those to which the prospects of eternal rewards form so powerful an incentive for us?

98. Why may not I return again as often as it is possible for me to acquire new knowledge, new skill? Do I carry so much away with me *at one time* as to render my return useless?

99. Is it for that reason? Or is it because I forget that I have already been here? If so, I am thankful for having forgotten it! The remembrance of my former conditions would only allow me to make an unprofitable use of the present. And what I *must* forget for the present, shall I necessarily have forgotten for ever?

100. Or is it because too much time would thus be lost to me? Lost? And what, then, have I to lose? Is not the whole of Eternity mine?



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